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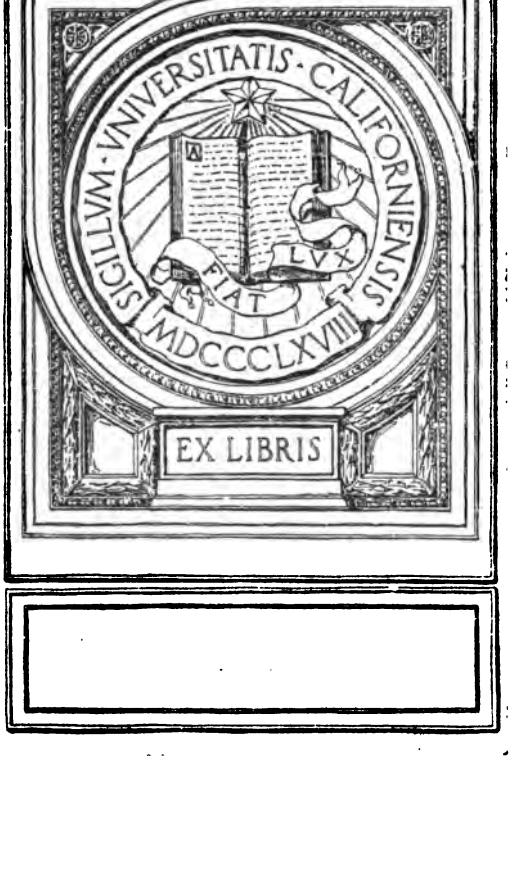
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Medieval Studies

By

G. G. Coulton, M.A.

No. 1.

The Monastic Legend

A criticism of Abbot Gasquet's "Henry VIII and the English Monasteries."

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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Medieval Studies

BY

G. G. COULTON, M.A.

THESE essays, mostly reprinted from the Reviews, are intended to defend the moderate Anglican position against the misrepresentations of writers who disparage modern civilization in comparison with a purely imaginary and unhistorical idea of medieval life.

The Author attempts to show how much is lost, even from the purely picturesque point of view, by thus sacrificing plain truth to false sentiment; for we shall never see the great men of the past in their full greatness until we realize the difficulties under which they lived and worked. Although the Studies are necessarily controversial to this extent, they are written *entirely from orthodox pre-reformation sources*, no others being quoted except here and there in corroboration of facts already established: since the curse of Church history is the too frequent habit of writing from second-hand or partisan documents.

As the plan of these pamphlets renders it impossible to give a crowd of references which would only weary the general reader, the Author is glad to give a definite guarantee of his good faith by offering four pages in each pamphlet to any competent critic who will undertake to convict him of serious error. If his statements are inaccurate, he thus undertakes to supply their refutation at his own expense. He has already made a similar offer in vain to many Romanist controversialists, including all the writers for the Catholic Truth society; and he now repeats the offer, in order to enable the general reader to realize how strongly Anglicanism is supported on many important points by the most incontrovertible medieval testimony.

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The Monastic Legend.

"To manipulate ancient writings, to edit history in one's own favour, did not appear criminal [in the "Ages of Faith"] if the end in view were otherwise just and good."

Dr. W. BARRY (*Papal Monarchy*, p. 133).

THE very thoroughness of the Reformation is, in one sense, its weakness. Modern morals are already so far removed from the medieval, that Anglicans are ready to disbelieve the most undoubted scandals of the past; and modern tolerance listens candidly to the misrepresentations of writers whose shrift in pre-reformation days would have been short. In the face of opponents who devote their lives not only to exposing the real faults and foibles of the Reformers, but also to raking up scandal against them from the most tainted sources, one is driven sometimes to the pertinent retort that, even if all these things were true, matters were incomparably worse in the "Ages of Faith."[1] But the very strength of this argument from the point of view of historical truth makes it very difficult of use in modern society; just as, in good company, the very grossness of a man's defects may save him from the obvious retort which would crush him at once among his own class. Thus, the modern Romanist controversialist finds a real protection, for a time at least, in the very unsavouriness of certain chapters of medieval Church History. Abbot Gasquet—I name him as the most brilliant writer on the particular subject with which I propose to deal—has argued for the last twenty years, with very considerable show of historical apparatus, that the Dissolution of the Monasteries was an act of unredeemed iniquity, and that the blood of these innocent men is still on our heads. Many students who are convinced of the contrary have yet been reluctant to enter upon a somewhat invidious discussion; and, meanwhile, the Abbot has found his strongest ally in the comparative decency of modern society. That which, before the Reformation, was proclaimed daily without reserve—by sinners with wanton laughter, and by saints with bitter tears—is too shocking to be lightly believed by men who know what their own clergy have been for generations past, and who have never seen

1. I have pointed this out more fully in an article on "Catholicism and Morals" in the *Independent Review* of June, 1905, in answer to an attack of Dr. W. Barry's which shows either great ignorance of medieval life, or strange blindness to the lessons of history.

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the monastic system at work except under the safeguards afforded by modern laws and modern publicity. If we may believe a certain section of the Press, Abbot Gasquet has been lecturing in America with conspicuous success on the innocence of the medieval monks and the sin of their suppression. He is apparently about to repeat these lectures in England: it is, therefore, time to abandon the attitude of distant scepticism, and to look closely into arguments which, if sound, would call for an act of national repentance.

Six years ago, in going through a course of Roman apologetics, I came upon Abbot Gasquet's book. It struck me from the first page as extraordinarily inconsistent with original documents; and one point specially arrested my attention. The Abbot claims that "anything like general immorality was altogether unknown among the Religious of England. This much is clearly proved by the testimony of the acts of Episcopal visitations . . . ."[1] I read this with some surprise: for I knew a little of English visitation acts, and they seemed to me to point clearly to the opposite conclusion. It was necessary, therefore, to make sure first of all which were the documents to which he appealed in support of a statement which, if correct, might almost have spared him the trouble of writing all the rest of his book. I therefore expressed my doubts by letter to him, pointing out that his mere general reference to "the Episcopal Registers" or "the Acts of Episcopal Visitation" was no reference at all; and begging him therefore to supply this grave omission by letter. To save him trouble, and for the sake of a clear understanding, I enclosed a list of the score of volumes containing Episcopal Visitations which I knew to be accessible to the general student, requesting him to initial those upon which he could rely as supporting his statement, and to draw his pen through those for which he could not answer from personal study. At the receipt of my letter, he was unfortunately under doctor's orders; but when I repeated my request six months later his answer was final. It amounted to a confession that he had forgotten the very names of the books on which he had professed to base the most sweeping and vital statement, perhaps, in his whole history.[2] His book had, indeed, surprised me at first by the easy familiarity which it claimed *en bloc* with documents so bulky, and so laborious to study, as the Episcopal Registers: all the greater, therefore, was my surprise to find him now pleading that, without much search among his notes, he could not even *name* such of these twenty volumes as he had studied and could safely appeal to. In this embarrassment, I was driven to make what I could out of the Abbot's footnotes. I found that the Episcopal Acts are, in fact, quoted somewhat sparingly—far less freely than

1. I. 38. My quotations are from the 3rd edition, 1888.
2. I have these letters by me, and will gladly print them with the Abbot's leave.

many other books of infinitely less historical value. Some of the references, being to volumes still unprinted, are difficult to verify; but, fortunately, by far the most important are to books which, though still in MS. when he wrote, have since been printed. These are, firstly, the Exeter Registers, to which one very confident appeal is made, though apparently at second-hand; and secondly, the Norwich Visitations of Bishop Nicke, to which he thrice appeals for confirmation of some of his most sweeping statements.[1] This simplifies the problem a good deal. In the days when the learned Abbot did know which Registers he had or had not read, he appealed specially to the records of Exeter and Norwich, as proving (1) the methods of visitation, (2) the fact that there was "nothing like general immorality" in the monasteries, (3) that, for any grave breach of the Rule, punishment was stern and unsparing, such as the instance which he quotes in full from a York Register.[2] Here, then, is a plain issue, which I will test first by Nicke, from whose "two valuable volumes" he claims support in the most emphatic words. "Nothing like general immorality" is, of course, a somewhat vague plea: we find, for instance, an earnest and learned Roman Catholic apologist in France congratulating himself that the Thirteenth Century Visitations of Rouen show no more than thirty-three unchaste nuns out of a total of 373, or nine per cent.[3] Abbot Gasquet, however, has evidently a far higher ideal of monastic chastity; for he claims that the registers give us a picture very different from that of Henry's visitation, which, after all, accused only about six per cent. of immorality.[4] Yet, on Nicke's first visitation of his diocese, in 1514, he found not only six, but *very nearly seven per cent.* of his Religious accused by their fellow monks or nuns of immorality. The arguments which fill nine-tenths of the Abbot's two bulky volumes are meant to prove that the reports of Henry VIII's commissioners are too bad to be credible. In the course of these arguments he appeals confidently to the support of certain episcopal visitations, still in manuscript, but well-known to himself. When these are printed, it transpires that they yield a statistical result even less favourable than Henry VIII's![5] And the most inexplicable error is still to come. We are twice referred emphatically to Nicke

1. Of the six Exeter volumes only the least important had been published when Dr. Gasquet wrote.

2. I 36 *note*, 334 *note*: cf. 355.

3. E. du Méril, in Soc. des Antiq. de Normandie, 1847, p. 125.

4. I, 352, where I suppose the Abbot's "many thousands" cannot possibly mean less than 4,000. Assuming only that figure, the 250 cases reported give us 6.25 per cent. The numbers in Nicke are 332 monks and nuns, with twenty-two cases of immorality, *i.e.* 6.9 per cent. Besides these, one is reported as apostate, and another as vagabond; if, as we may almost certainly assume, these two might also be added to the rest, they would bring the percentage to a little over seven.

5. The later visits show considerably less; but they are many obvious reasons why a first visit should show a worse record than others. After all, Henry's also was a first visit.

for proof that grave faults were vigorously punished.[1] Yet, (to take one grave fault only) Nicke found thirty-five monks or nuns reported incontinent by their fellows. In fifteen, at least, of these cases, either a child had been born, or Nicke's injunctions show that he held the charge to be founded. Yet he records *only two* punishments; though in one other case, which was already ancient history, we hear that the prior himself had "corrected" it at the time. Of the two punishments recorded, one was inflicted upon an unchaste nun, and runs as follows: "The Lord Bishop . . . . . enjoined on the Lady Agnes Smyth that she should sit for a whole month below all the other nuns, and should repeat during that period the whole Psalter seven times over." The other offender was the Prior of Walsingham, who had habitually embezzled moneys, stolen jewels and plate from the treasury, committed manslaughter on a peasant, and exalted John Smyth's wife to a quasi-official position as his helpmate. The Bishop ordered the summary dismissal of Mrs. Smyth, and within six weeks he had prevailed upon the prior to resign his office, *under assurance of "a competent annual pension" for the rest of his life.* Again, the Prior of Yarmouth complains to Nicke against the system of banishing "incorrigible" monks to the smaller priories, where they spent their days in dicing and indiscipline.[2] There are several complaints against drunken monks, but none are punished—indeed Dr. Rashdall has pointed out that drunkenness was not recognised as a punishable offence by the medieval Oxford statutes. The gravest peculations and betrayals of trust are recorded without punishment. An excellent case is that of Wymondham in 1514. The late abbot had peculated; the present abbot had not rendered his accounts. The prior had broken open a chest and abstracted documents without the abbot's leave; had tried to kill two fellow-monks with a sword; had thrown a stone at another in the abbot's presence; had not been to confession for nine months. When threatened with my Lord Bishop's displeasure, he had said: "tell my Lord both and my Ladie, for I care nott"; the sting of which lay no doubt in the fact that Nicke's own morals were in evil repute among his contemporaries. The night services were often neglected, the choice books and ornaments were out of repair: other books had been stolen. There was no schoolmaster. Some monks had broken the cloister bounds. One was a drunkard, had openly denied the Resurrection of the Dead, absented himself from matins, and was suspected of adultery. Another's cell was frequented by "suspected women," two married, and two of the widow's daughters at the abbey dairy. Another was grievously suspected of adultery. One of the confessors had broken the seal of confession, and the prior complained that

1. I. 36 *note*, 334 *note*.
2. pp. 197, 265. *Cellulas* is an obvious slip of the scribe's or editor's for *cellas*.

his attempt at reform had caused the monks to "blaspheme his name in public places without the monastery." This would seem a sufficiently heavy bill of offences for a community of eleven monks; I here subjoin, word for word, all the notice the Bishop takes of it. "The Lord Bishop enjoined *that henceforth no layman should be admitted to any office within the aforesaid abbey until he had first pledged himself to keep faithfully the secrets of the abbey.* He further enjoined that he (the abbot) should elect another monk in the prior's place within a month. After which injunctions and the aforesaid evidence taken, my Lord concluded his visitation for this time." I must beg the reader to note the words I have italicized, for I shall recur to them. In the meantime I only wish to point out how these MS. volumes, when printed, contradict Dr. Gasquet flatly by showing an impunity almost incredible to modern readers; yet, as I am ready to prove, if necessary, *absolutely normal in the Middle Ages.*

So much for Nicke's evidence: now for that of the Exeter Registers. Dr. Gasquet argues, with an emphasis which may seem even exaggerated, that the Black Death of 1349 dealt a blow to the monasteries, materially and morally, from which they had not yet recovered at the Dissolution (1. 7.) In choosing therefore the first twenty-one years (1327—48) of the Register of Bishop Grandisson, perhaps the greatest of all the medieval bishops of Exeter, I am choosing a field which ought to be eminently favourable to Dr. Gasquet. How far this is so, the reader may judge from the history of three monasteries which I find extracted in my notes.

(1) ST. JAMES' PRIORY, near Exeter. In 1334 (p. 279) the prior of this house, William de Bittendene, is stigmatized as "oftentimes convicted of embezzlement and fornication, and lately refusing to allow himself to be visited . . . pretending himself exempt," in spite of documentary evidence to the contrary. The priory was waste, the church in ruins, and divine service had ceased. The Bishop excommunicated him and tried to sequestrate the revenues of his priory. In 1335 he was "wandering about the country, having let loose the reins of honesty and utterly cast away the modesty of his monastic profession," and the Bishop therefore writes sadly to the prior of the parent house of St. Martin "Would that you would send some good man to rule the said house: for this person fears neither God nor man, which is a blot upon the honour of monasticism and justly offends God's majesty." In 1338, however, William was still prior, and the Bishop wrote of his past "enormously dissolute life" without implying any present amendment. Next year we find him again as prior, and noted among the clergy who have not paid the last tax to the Pope. There is no record of his being deposed. (pp. 71, 279, 289, 305, 745, 883.)

(2) TAVISTOCK ABBEY. In 1328 Grandisson wrote to the Pope,

his good friend and patron, "God is my witness that I lie not: the Abbot of Tavistock in my diocese, a native of Aquitaine, now promoted by your Holiness through the deceit of others, hath since his first arrival held himself aloof from all religion and all worship of God." This was Robert Bonus, who had previously been Abbot of La Réole in Gascony. The Bishop, out of reverence for the Pope and his noble French friends, had first "coaxed him gently to myself" and then, when kindness failed, had threatened his own wrath and the Pope's; but both alike in vain. Bonus had already begun to waste the Abbey revenues, and, "in a fit of drunkenness, had almost slain" a young French squire of his own retinue. Grandisson, though a man of noble birth, high attainments, great force of will, and special favour with the Pope, was quite unable to enlist the help of the Papal court. In 1333 he had on the contrary to justify himself to some of the Cardinals for such pressure as he had dared to bring upon Bonus, over whose morals he thinks it better to draw a veil, "out of reverence to your Paternity and to his Order." "In these days especially, wherein the wickedness of the human race is increasing" it is almost impossible for a prelate to do his duty without incurring slander: he therefore prays his friends at the court to credit no reports of his alleged indiscretions, or illegalities, until at least they have heard his own version of the matter. How little he deserved such accusations, his own letters to the erring Abbot prove only too clearly. As early as 1328, he found himself compelled by popular outcry to come and visit the Abbey: but the Abbot having put in the usual plea of exemption, he offered to waive his episcopal rights, and come informally as a friend. It was only in 1333, when both cajolery and threats had proved unavailing, that the bishop proceeded to sequestrate the revenues of the house, whose Abbot "wasteful not only of goods but also of his own fame, is leading and is wont to lead a life detestable to God and man, publicly and daily eating flesh in Lententide without reasonable cause, and damnably committing very many other enormous offences which we pass in silence through reverence for the monastic order and profession." He "has notoriously so dilapidated and consumed the monastery's property that it is now brought to the disgrace of almost irreparable ruin," and that "some monks of the convent have needed to be sent wandering abroad to beg for their bare daily livelihood." Therefore, "lest the wickedness of this his obstinacy and dilapidation escape utterly unpunished," since he has already scorned our mandate of sequestration and excommunication, we commit to the Abbot of Buckland and certain other monks the duty of seeing our orders strictly obeyed. Moreover, since he has set us at nought and refused to appear before us, we hereby depose him (pp. 97, 98, 109, 395, 405, 703-6, 717).

Nor was this the end of troubles at Tavistock. The prior and

monks put the choice of a new Abbot in the bishop's hands, and the bishop chose John de Courtenay, whom he had before chosen as one of those who were to enforce his sentence against the late Abbot. Grandisson, in his joy at getting rid of Bonus, described his new choice as "a man recommended by many virtuous gifts:" but he was soon bitterly undeceived. Only five years later, he finds the Abbey again bankrupt and suffering from "certain proved faults both in the Head and in the Members, which we, willing to spare your reputation, have thought best to pass over in silence for the present." He cuts off the Abbot from all share in the money affairs of the house, banishes him from the precincts until the debt shall be paid, orders him to abandon his unmonastic foppishness of dress, and directs that one of his fellow monks, "recommended by his honesty and cleanliness of life" should be always in attendance on him as chaplain, and sleep in his chamber. Meanwhile he is to have, for his own and chaplain's support, a pension of 120 marks—or about £1600 a year of modern money—the rest of the monks being put off with 100 marks a year between them. Seven years later, in 1345, Grandisson visited the Abbey, and found "very many faults; some of which—to say nothing for the present of the greatest and most grievous—we set forth clearly to you." The Abbot has again relapsed into secular finery, and has imitators among the monks; three of them have "frequently offended hitherto by casting off their monastic habit." Nearly all the monks ate forbidden flesh in their own cells. The Abbot had been proved to "consort day and night with secular persons, even of suspected morals, in damnable contempt of our former mandates:" on which account the bishop again directs that a monk of acknowledged purity of life should act as his chaplain, be always with him, and sleep in his chamber. The monastic moneys were wasted on a pack of hounds, and two of the monks had been guilty of embezzlement. In 1348 again the Abbot, "defamed by many excesses and crimes well-known to you and to the whole convent" has not only for many years wasted the Abbey property; but "finding no more moveable goods wherewith further to satisfy his pleasures," has begun to sell and alienate even farms and rents. The beautiful buildings were falling to ruin; and the monks were as deformed in inward religion as was their abbey in outward aspect. The Bishop therefore decrees the Abbot's suspension. He is no longer to enjoy his liberal pension, but "removing all his costly retinue and all hunting dogs whatsoever," to live in common with the rest of the monks. A few months afterwards came the Black Death, and we hear no more of John de Courtenay. (pp. 887, 889, 996-8.)

(3) BARNSTAPLE PRIORY. This was a cell to St. Martin des Champs at Paris. In 1332 the prior was John de Gemma, who preferred Paris life, and did not reside, "to the grave peril of the souls

committed to his charge, and as a pernicious example to very many others." The Bishop therefore sequestrated the priory revenues to compel his return, and took proceedings against one John of Paris who had intruded himself as prior during the real prior's absence. The prior of St. Martin, instead of sending the latter back to his work, appointed in his stead one John Soier. Grandisson then wrote to St. Martin's, begging earnestly and almost humbly that this appointment might be quashed: "otherwise, we beg you not to take it ill even if we freely use our right of reforming those points on which, with bitterness of heart, we perceive the said priory [of Barnstaple] to need reformation. For we must tell you truly that Bro. John Soier, your monk and presentee, is said, as one who is prodigal both of his reputation and of his salvation, to have lived in Wales a life so enormously dissolute, (even begetting a family and bringing it up notoriously at the expense of Church goods, and likewise publicly defamed of the vice of simony recently committed here at Barnstaple for the aforesaid reasons, and suspected of future embezzlement) that he should of right fear to climb to the high post of prior of this monastery, and we must fear to admit him against our own conscience." The protest was utterly unavailing: and one of the strongest bishops, in perhaps the most independent of all great European countries, found himself compelled to accept this ruffian as prior of Barnstaple! In 1334 Soier died, but this brief space of two years had sufficed to justify all the Bishop's fears. In protesting against the Prior of St. Martin's sudden recall of the new prior after only a few months' residence in England, Grandisson writes: "If yon often acted thus, the priory would be ruined and all observance of religion dissolved. . . . For the present income, and even all that will come in for a long time hence, will scarce suffice for the bare necessities of the prior and his monks at that house; since his accursed predecessor (I say it with shame) together with one John Colecote his abettor, have inhumanly dealt the priory almost irreparable harm."

Let me point out here the full significance of this evidence. Dr. Gasquet appeals to the Exeter Registers to prove two main points (1) "The graver irregularities which are recorded against the religious after the most searching scrutiny, made by the bishops or their commissioners, are after all few and far between;" and (2) "the extreme punishment with which such irregularities were visited proves that, so far from not being heeded, the moral reputation of the monastic and conventual establishments was considered of the first importance." Let me take those two points in order.

(1) The *rarity* of immorality in the diocese cannot possibly be proved from the Episcopal Registers: *for the Registers do not contain any full accounts of monastic visitations.* It is most important to insist

upon this point, since it is almost always blinked by apologists.[1] The actual Visitation records were written in separate rolls or books which have seldom survived and still more seldom been published.[2] *The Bishops' Registers themselves contain only here and there a few extracts from, or allusions to, these records, in cases where the gross scandal of the offence, or the sinners' contumacy, rendered the usual summary proceeding unavailing, and necessitated special and repeated attention from the Bishop himself.* Even in these cases, the misdemeanours are constantly veiled in a cloud of phrases, to avoid scandal. They therefore no more present a full record of serious monastic offences than the Journals of the House of Lords present a full record of the offences of British subjects.[3] If I am right in this assertion—and I offer Dr. Gasquet the chance of contradicting me within the covers of this very pamphlet, besides the fact that here at least I have on my side a determined defender of monastic morality—then it shows sheer ignorance of the true facts to speak of the silence of the Registers (where they are silent) as proving the innocence of the monks. The Registers can at most offer us only records of a few cases (generally the worst, no doubt), and leave us to infer from these samples what the batch was like.

(2) This brings me to Dr. Gasquet's second contention—that the Exeter Registers prove "the extreme punishment with which irregularities were visited." On the contrary, they entirely agree with that of Nicke in proving exactly the opposite. This exceptionally strong and determined bishop, with his exceptional influence at the Pope's court, is obliged to accept a notorious adulterer as prior of Barnstaple without hint of his punishment, and is quite unable to bring to justice the equally notorious prior of St. James's, or even to get rid of him

1. An *Athenæum* reviewer who seems to be responsible for several articles containing *obiter dicta* in defence of monastic morality has apparently at last begun to realize this truth. (April 22, 1905, p. 490). This may be connected with the fact that I pointed it out a year or two ago in a letter addressed to the editor, begging the reviewer at about the same time to jot me down on a postcard (without prejudice to his anonymity) full references to a manuscript which he cited as proving monastic innocence. I received no reply to my request for this reference; but my trouble has not been wasted if I have at last made him understand that the Registers do not profess to record Visitation *comperta*.

2. Nicke's and Goldwell's visitations are of this kind: and Abbot Gasquet evidently recognizes this, though only dimly (p. 36, note), and without realizing the crucial importance of the difference to his argument.

3. This accounts for the striking fact that the worst cases are to be found in the Registers of the strongest and best bishops. Grandisson's gives us a far worse picture of clerical morality than that of his predecessor Stapledon or his successors Brantyngham and Stafford, who were all three great ministers, busy to their finger-tips with state affairs, and compelled to treat the government of their diocese as a secondary matter. Stafford, the best of them, spent scarcely more than half his twenty-five years' episcopate in active episcopal work. Abuses which such men winked at or compounded with, Grandisson fought against with all his might; and hence his Register shows us more immoralities than theirs, though nobody who knows the character and work of the four bishops can doubt that the diocese was in a far better state of discipline under him.

from his priory. It costs him a struggle of five years to get rid of Bonus, and he has nearly as great difficulty with Courtenay!

Here again the very strength of my case is in a measure its weakness. Is it credible, the reader may well ask, that a writer of such reputation can have referred the unsuspecting public so confidently to MS. sources which contradict him so flatly on such simple issues? I cannot say how far it is credible, I only say that it is true, and that I will willingly affirm its truth by the one guarantee in my power—by offering to put myself in the pillory if I am wrong. Before publishing this pamphlet I will gladly allow Abbot Gasquet eight pages in it for any denials or explanations which he would care to see printed within the same covers as my criticism. If he takes me at my word my readers will know that they have both sides of the question before them. If, however, he declines the challenge, I may here refer by anticipation to two articles in the *Church Quarterly* for Oct. 1900, and Jan. 1901, in which he is proved to have supported his theories on the Old English Bible by mis-statements and omissions only a few degrees less inexplicable than these which I here expose.

Having thus dealt with what are really the Abbot's most important witnesses, I will review very briefly the abundant evidence which proves that Henry's condemnatory report was substantially correct. I say *substantially*, because I have little more belief than Abbot Gasquet in the *unsupported* evidence of Henry's commissioners. The King found in the monasteries one of the most serious hindrances to to his political schemes. He dreaded their power and coveted their money; therefore he appointed commissioners to make out a case against them. In this he simply followed the precedents of medieval justice; for Dr. Gasquet entirely blinks the fact that Henry was a true child of the Middle Ages. The injustice with which he carried out his designs was incomparably less revolting than that with which a Fourteenth Century King and Pope suppressed the Order of the Templars. The barefaced dishonesty with which he pocketed the spoils compares favourably, after all, with that of the Popes for a good three centuries before the Reformation. During these three centuries, the Pontiffs had regularly squeezed vast sums out of Europe for the Crusades, and had spent them as regularly on personal wars, personal luxuries, or personal vices. Still, the fact remains that Henry's injustice and cupidity were very great. Dr. Gasquet easily proves thus much; and, indeed, it had been clearly proved before him. But here, on the very threshold of the real question, nearly all his arguments stop. Yet the real question is far more important than that on which he spends nine-tenths of his arguments. For three centuries and more before the Reformation, public opinion had discussed the merits and demerits of monastic life. Does the public judgment of those three centuries show us a state of things compatible with modern civilization, or does it show

us the monks so idle and useless as a body, so depraved in many instances, that no sane man would wish to see them among us again at this moment in the same state in which the Dissolution found them? That is the real question, and that is what Dr. Gasquet has made no serious attempt to answer. He blinks the obvious fact that, from the date at which Dissolution first became a burning political question, evidence *on either side* must be received with the greatest caution. Nearly all his witnesses are as *ex parte* and as untrustworthy as the Commissioners themselves. An old man (name unknown), who just remembered the Dissolution as a boy—another later and equally anonymous author, many of whose statements are so patently false that I can only wonder how the Abbot dared to print them—these are

NOTE.—Abbot Gasquet having silently declined the Author's repeated offer of eight pages within these covers for his reply to the very definite accusations here made, the Author is compelled to appeal to the public to judge the reasons of this silence.

him some other year? Again, while justly reprobating the alleged

1. (1) The *Rites of Durham* is a little book by an anonymous hand, of which the earliest MS. dates from half-a-century after the Suppression. It describes the monastery and church of Durham Cathedral, chiefly from the point of view of a ritualist and antiquary, referring only incidentally to the monks' morals, etc. It remained in MS. during the years when its publication might have provoked flat contradictions from others who also remembered the monastery in their youth; and, when finally unearthed and printed, it was at once attacked, (rightly or wrongly), as apocryphal and legendary. (2) The Cole MS. is equally anonymous and obscure; its author, I believe, does not even pretend to have seen most of what he describes, and tells us definitely that for a knowledge of the monks' morals and usefulness he was dependent on his father's report (II, 321). It was apparently never published, even partially, until Henry and the dispossessed monks had been more than two centuries in their graves. Yet these are documents on which Dr. Gasquet lays special stress, to the exclusion (as will be seen) of the most definite and irrefragable evidence. Moreover, the author of the latter MS. at once puts himself out of court by asserting that the cottages of England had increased *fivefold* in the sixty years following the Suppression: a statement which Dr. Gasquet renders still more absurd by italicizing the word *towns* and laying stress on it in its modern sense of boroughs and market-towns. To a writer of this date, as to modern villagers, the term *town* includes even hamlets. On this blunder he founds what, to many readers, would be one of his most telling arguments. It is not enough for him to build upon such worthless hole-and-corner documents; but he must also misread them in order to get the results he needs!

indignities offered to nuns by Henry's Commissioners, (and this is one of his strongest points, though the assertion rests only on the word of two bitter partisans, of whom one was not even a contemporary,) he ignores the fact that the very best of medieval visitors permitted themselves on similar occasions liberties which are absolutely revolting to modern ideas. He accepts, whenever they suit his purpose, statistics which are demonstrably wrong by at least 4,000 per cent. (I. 2—II. 504). In the blind fervour of his special pleading, he mistranslates simple Latin in a way which would do a schoolboy discredit.[1] He misapplies to the sixteenth century monks a testimonial which Professor Thorold Rogers does indeed give to those of the thirteenth century, but expressly refuses, on the very same page, to those of Henry VIII's reign in whose favour Dr. Gasquet quotes them![2] Again, Dr. Gasquet imputes the miseries of modern England to the Dissolution, without pausing to consider what was the state of the working classes in all countries where the monasteries stood until the French Revolution. He takes care to name religious houses where Nicke's visits give a better result than those of Henry's Commissioners, but suppresses the cases in which Nicke corroborates or even outdoes the others in blame. But perhaps his weakest and most dangerous argument, though one of his most frequent, is to emphasize the very grossness of this or that accusation made by the Commissioners, and then to work upon the modern sense of decency. "Can you, as English gentlemen, believe this to be true?" To the credit

1. I. 344, where he translates *fatentur* "they are reported!" A few lines lower down his translation can scarcely be a mere blunder in Latin. He translates (italicizing the main words) "though *report* says the monks here live licentiously" where Dr. Gairdner renders, "though no monks are more notorious for licentious living."

2. I will give the quotations here, since they exemplify clearly in a few lines the Abbot's habits of literary dishonesty—it is impossible to use a milder phrase. In a chapter designed to set forth the harm done to England by the Suppression, he writes (II. 496). "In strong contrast with the caricature drawn from the imagination of novelists, who at best clothe the cloistered life with a poetic unreality, the description given of it by a deeply-read writer of modern times may be here quoted. 'The monks,' says Mr. Thorold Rogers, 'were the men of letters in the middle ages, the historians, the jurists, the philosophers, the physicians the students of nature, the founders of schools, authors of chronicles, teachers of agriculture, fairly indulgent landlords and advocates of genuine *(sic)* dealing towards the peasantry.'" Here, as often, he gives no reference; but his allusion is evidently to the following passage from Thorold Rogers's "Six Centuries of Work and Wages." (p. 362) "These monasteries were in the zenith of their reputation during the first half of the thirteenth century, when they had, it would appear, been stimulated to a beneficent activity by the rivalry of the two new orders of preaching frairs, those of Dominic and Francis. They had, to be sure, the fatal gift of wealth, but they seem to have used their wealth well. They were founders of schools, authors of chronicles, teachers of agriculture, fairly indulgent landlords, and advocates of generous dealing towards the peasantry." But, only eleven lines lower down, Professor Rogers goes on "It is not easy to understand how these monasteries declined in character and usefulness till they came to the condition which is described so indignantly by Gascoigne,—*a condition which renders probable the charges which Henry the Eighth's commissioners made against them.* But many causes appear to have contributed to the result." The italics are mine: the quotation needs no further comment.

of modern Anglicanism, that has proved one of his most effective arguments, as I know by experience. Yet, however successful such an argument may be with candid modern opponents, it would have been simply laughed out of court in the Middle Ages. Of all these cases which the Abbot seeks to discredit as inherently improbable because they shock nineteenth-century minds, there is not one which cannot be paralleled and outmatched from the most unimpeachable medieval sources. For instance, one of Dr. Gasquet's strongest points is that so many of the accused monks and nuns were afterwards pensioned. Yet the reader has already seen how Bishop Nicke pensioned the adulterous, thieving, and homicidal prior of Walsingham: how the scandalous Abbot of Tavistock was allowed far more for his single pension than the rest of the monks put together received for their needs; and far worse cases might be quoted. A century earlier, Balthasar Cossa, chamberlain to Pope Boniface IX, scandalized even the people of Rome by more shameless immorality than any that Henry's Commissioners record; and the Pope found no better remedy than to create him Cardinal and send him as Legate to Bologna. Here he outdid even his previous enormities, and was presently raised to the Papacy. Anyone who has been impressed by Dr. Gasquet's argument *ex incredibili* should read the catalogue of the crimes with which he was charged by the Council of Constance.[1] What is more, the cases which Dr. Gasquet tries to put out of court as too impossible to be believed can all be matched from these very Visitations to which he has appealed as proving the contrary! He finds inherent improbability in the statement that the Prior of Crutched Friars was found in gross misconduct at eleven o'clock on a Friday in Lent: yet we find an orthodox and irreproachable visitor accusing a monk of Wendling of adultery "not only in the holy time of Lent, but also in Passion Week."[2] The Abbot of Langdon was accused of incontinence and drunkenness: to which Dr. Gasquet objects that "if Layton's accusations were true the Abbot could have been got rid of without expense and without the scandal of proposing to place such a man in cure of souls." Yet neither Nicke nor Grandisson, as we have seen, could get rid of worse offenders without expense: and in pleading the improbability of Layton's story, Abbot Gasquet simply supplies another proof that he does not know his own documents. Again, in the case of the Abbot of Wigmore, he claims that "the accusation of murder is absurd on the face of it, and may be dismissed." Yet Nicke's Abbot of Walsingham had murdered a

1. Lea, *Celibacy*, p. 344. A case even more shocking, perhaps, is to be found lower down on p. 431.

2. Brit. Mus. MS. Add. 4934. p. 82. Dr. Gasquet is at present editing the Register from which Peck made these extracts: I am not aware that he refers to it in his *Henry VIII*, but it was well known and easily accessible then.

peasant: Grandisson's Abbot of Tavistock had tried to murder his squire: and the Registers give no hint in either case of what we should consider a fit punishment for such an offence. Eudes Rigaud, a far stronger prelate than either, was entirely unable to prevent his subordinate Bishop of Lisieux from giving a canonry in that cathedral to a nephew who was "ill-famed of homicide." (p. 61). Nobody who had really faced the facts of the Middle Ages could appeal to impunity as a proof of innocence, as Abbot Gasquet more than once does.

Nicke, for instance, found the Prior of Eye in 1514 suspected with Margery Bery, for whose son he had built a house. In 1520, at the same monastery, Margaret Verre, who may or may not be a different person, "is dwelling with the prior and lives suspiciously." There is no record of punishment in either case. The reader will remember how the Bishop's injunctions for Wymondham, which I italicized, show far more solicitude to avoid scandal outside the monastery than to inflict punishment inside; and we find that even the most energetic and saintly prelates of the Middle Ages left the plainest immoralities unpunished whenever they could thus avoid a public scandal.[1] As a far more accurate scholar than Dr. Gasquet has pointed out, in speaking of the regular abuses revealed by visitations of the Wells, Ripon, Beverley and Southwell chapters, even the frequency and gravity of the accusations is far less significant than the impunity of admitted guilt. "Next to contumacy," writes Mr. A. F. Leach, "revealing the secrets of the chapter or the Vicar's Hall to the laity seems to have been the most heinous crime . . . Only two of the innumerable cases are actually suspended for sexual misbehaviour . . . . . We can only conclude that neglect of duty and sexual immorality were so common that they were never punished, except when some public scandal was created by them."[2]

That is the real clue to the visitation records which have come down to us: Religious houses had, even at the crown of the Middle Ages, so good reason to dread lay criticism that nothing might not be pardoned so long as scandal could be avoided. Even St. Bonaventura, and at least one Archbishop worthy to be placed by his side in

1. Cf. the following extract from the Register of Archbishop Eudes Rigaud, the friend of St. Bonaventura and one of the most determined medieval reformers, whose contemporaries surnamed him "the Pattern of Good Life." He is visiting a Chapter at Pontoise. "Richard de Triguel is accused of sin with a certain prostitute; yet there was no great scandal: we warned him to desist. Again Master Robert is accused with the gardener's daughter, and has but lately had a child by her, but the scandal is not great: we warned him to desist. Moreover, he behaves improperly in going barefooted outside his door to a certain workshop where women of ill fame are often congregated: we warned him to desist from such behaviour." (p. 42). This hushing-up spirit is constantly traceable in the visitation records, and damages them very seriously as witnesses for the defence. When the Register of one of the strongest prelates in the Middle Ages reads like this, how can we argue from the silence of Bishops who scarcely ever lived in their dioceses, or whose own lives were notoriously immoral?

2. Introd. to "Southwell Visitations," (Camden Soc.) pp. 75, 85, 89.

Dante's heaven, felt this as strongly as it was felt by inferior men. For, of all Dr. Gasquet's mis-statements, perhaps none is so hopelesssly inaccurate as his repeated assertion that the Middle Ages did not accuse the monks, and that their evil repute dates from Henry VIII or later. This assertion sums up the whole object of his two bulky volumes, and I must contrast it very briefly with notorious facts. On the one hand, the ascetic writers assure us emphatically and repeatedly that immorality will ensue in monasteries if the monks cease to work hard, are allowed pocket-money, gad abroad, or eat flesh except with the utmost parsimony. On the other hand, we know that not one only, but all of these relaxations were rather the rule than the exception in the sixteenth century. The desperate efforts made to prevent the monks from possessing private property testify not only to the serious bearing of this point on convent morality, but also to the irresistible growth of luxury and indiscipline. Innocent III, among his other reforms, decreed that the "proprietary" monk or nun should be buried like a dog in a dunghill, as a token of the soul's certain damnation. Torquemada gravely asserted that a Religious committed mortal sin by merely claiming a book as his own, except by a mere slip of the tongue. No clause of the Benedictine rule was more explicit or hedged round with greater safeguards; yet Dr. Kitchin points out how the Winchester monks had their regular pocket money or private incomes; and to Nicke they clamour again and again for the money which, if he or they had taken the rule seriously, was the wages of death to their souls. Again, in the matters of labour, of strict attendance at the services, of wandering outside the walls—in all those safeguards of monastic morality, the rule was equally relaxed. The Carthusians alone (I believe) kept to the original Benedictine rule about flesh; and they alone have been able to take for their motto with some real truth "Never *re*formed, because never *de*formed." Henry's Commissioners, therefore, only professed to find in the monasteries that which monastic disciplinarians had prophesied as certain. Again, medieval literature simply swarms with tales of monastic immoralities—not only or mainly, as Dr. Gasquet asserts, of a ribald character and imported from the East —but solemnly told in solemn works of theology written by monks or friars. I believe it might be safely asserted that such stories, told to point a moral, in religious books, outnumber those told in jest by medieval satirists. Moreover, very definite and almost unquotable attacks on monastic morality are made in the thirteenth century by Roger Bacon, St. Bonaventura, and his fellow-cardinal Jacques de Vitry; in the fourteenth by Rulman Merswin, Gower, Langland, and Wycliffe; and in the fifteenth by Gerson, one of the reputed authors of the *Imitation of Christ* and the greatest churchman of his age. Of these eight Wycliffe is far from being the most emphatic. Jacques de Vitry

stigmatises the monks, before the Franciscan reform, as "keeping an outward show of piety but denying its inward virtue . . . disobedient, murmurers, backbiters, bearing Christ's cross unwillingly, unclean and incontinent, walking after the flesh and not after the spirit." Turning to the nuns, he asserts that a girl's virtue was safe among none but those of the Cistercian Rule. (*Hist. Occ.* cc. 4, 15.) The learned Gower, who hated Lollardy and chose to spend his last years within the priory of St. Saviour's, Southwark, complained how "in some monasteries" of his time, chastity was dead, and lechery had taken her place; how "very many" monks(*plures*)went to hell for women, and how nuns were sometimes seduced not only by their confessors but by the very Visitors who were supposed to guard them.[1] (*Vox Clamantis.* IV. 327 ff., 461, 595 : an abstract of these complaints may be found in Morley's *English Literature*, vol. iv, p. 187.) Gerson, among other remarks almost equally strong, says in one place "I actually doubt whether boys and girls do not sometimes learn worse morals . . . at schools and among monks and nuns[2] than they would in brothels." Dr. Lea's *Clerical Celibacy* swarms with the most damaging quotations from medieval sources, and no Romanist has ever dared to grapple seriously with this book, now nearly forty years old. I recently pointed this out in vague and general terms à propos of a blunder in the *Church Times*, and appealed for several weeks to readers of that paper and of the *Catholic Times* to supply me with any *contemporary* denial of the numerous and definite accusations of medieval writers against monks and nuns. Nobody supplied me with such evidence, and both papers finally salved their consciences by suppressing my later letters. So far as I am aware, the orthodox theologians who undertook to refute Lollards with painful minuteness on other points, never dared to assert that the accusations of widespread monastic immorality were mere slanders. Gascoigne, though Wycliffe was one of his pet abominations, agreed with Wycliffe in repeatedly describing the monks as idle, uncharitable, and immoral. He looked upon them as a hindrance rather than a help to religious or secular education ; and he echoed with even wearisome iteration Wycliffe's plea for their disendowment. Over and over again he appeals to the Pope and the Lords of the Church to acknowledge that the then state of things was intolerable ; and indeed the final crash was only delayed for eighty years more. The fact is that, not content with misquoting the witnesses he brings forward for his own special plea, Dr. Gasquet has turned his face steadily away from all that would have thrown real light on his subject. To say nothing of the great Continental visitation records—Eudes Rigaud at Rouen,

1. It is noteworthy that Gascoigne, a contemporary, accuses Archbishop Stafford, while Bishop of Bath and Wells, of having had "sons and daughters" by a nun.

2. *In religionum et scholarum contuberniis.* Ed. Paris 1606. II. 628.

Busch in North Germany, Ambrose of Camaldoli in North Italy, Ninguarda in Bavaria and Austria—he knows nothing even of English visitations which give the lie to all the main contentions of his book. He knows nothing of Gascoigne, though Prof. Thorold Rogers refers emphatically to him in the very passage from which Dr. Gasquet has quoted with such signal bad faith. Yet Gascoigne, one of the greatest chancellors Oxford ever had, supplies by himself enough evidence to upset the whole apologetic fabric which Dr. Gasquet has reared so painfully in two large volumes. Dr. Gasquet, for instance, pleads that the lack of fifteenth and sixteenth century monastic chronicles points less to the idleness of the monks than to the "probability that many such monastic records were destroyed at the Dissolution" (p. xxx. note). Gascoigne, however, tells us plainly "Formerly the Kings kept, in the monasteries which they had founded, writers of the books of great Doctors and of chronicles which recorded the examples of former Kings: but alas! for now books are rather ruined and lost and corrupted than written afresh among monks! O then, O that Kings and Lords who have the advowsons of monasteries, moved thereto by good confessors, would enjoin on the abbots and convents to keep continually certain writers of [the works of] holy doctors and men great in science, under certain penalties imposed by the King or such Lords!" (p. 73, cf. 112). It is hardly too much to say that every argument of any importance in "*Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*" is similarly contradicted by the experience of this distinguished scholar, who in 1450 unwillingly prophesied much that was verified at the Reformation. Even if Dr. Gasquet had not already known that Gascoigne's "Liber Veritatum" was one of the most precious authorities for English life a few generations before the Reformation, Prof. Thorold Rogers' words must have drawn his attention to it. A single glance at the index would have shown that it was full of information about the monasteries; a couple of days' work, at the most, would have shown that Gascoigne, an eye-witness, gives the lie direct to all these theories of monastic innocence which are, after all, purely modern.

For I beg the reader to note that every word of my criticisms rests upon the statements of orthodox and learned medieval writers, except so far as I quote Wycliffe on points on which he agrees with the rest. From the testimony of these contemporaries, it follows that any attempt to whitewash the monasteries must take account of the following incontestable facts.

(1). Ascetic writers prophesy intolerable abuses if once the Religious get into the habit of neglecting any one of the main outward observances of their Rule. Four of these main outward observances, at least, were habitually neglected long before the Dissolution—monks habitually ate flesh, possessed property, had ceased to labour,

and went in and out of their precincts pretty well as they pleased.

(2). Not only satirists and comic writers almost without exception, but noble churchmen from whom the bitter confession was wrung by the necessity for reform, accuse the monasteries of deep degradation from their religious ideal, and often lay stress on those very immoralities which modern apologists ignorantly attribute to Protestant slanders.

(3). While Lollards and other heretics found one of their strongest arguments in the accusation of immorality, their orthodox opponents, replying point by point to heretical attacks, avoided this particular accusation with the most significant persistence. What is more, from the Thirteenth Century onwards, great churchmen are themselves found complaining that heretics drew their strongest arguments from the notorious immorality of the clergy.

(4). Although we have no diaries or autobiographies of medieval monastic reformers for England, such as those which throw so lurid a light on French, German and Italian monasticism before and after the Reformation, yet even the scantier English official documents frequently show us scandals which would not be tolerated in modern society.

(5). All the countries which did not suppress their monasteries in the Sixteenth Century have been obliged to do so since, at one time or another. The state of the French and Italian monasteries just before the Revolution was such as no apologist, so far as I am aware, has seriously attempted to defend.

These, then, are the questions which every champion of monastic purity must set himself to answer before he even begins to consider the evidence of Henry's commissioners. Why did the Fathers prophesy monastic immorality? Why did medieval saints and sinners, orthodox and heretics, complain of monastic immoralities? Why do the records of Visitors show us gross offenders enjoying absolute or comparative impunity? And why had those monasteries which were spared in the sixteenth century become intolerably corrupt, in the most exclusively Romanist countries, before the end of the eighteenth? These are points with which, hitherto, Dr. Gasquet has made no attempt to deal, though they stare the historian in the face. His indiscreet and disingenuous advocacy, though disguised under an appearance of candour and commended by a charming style, can only prejudice his clients in the long run. Not until the original documentary evidence has been sifted and summed up by a first-rate historian—and it is a disgrace to English historical scholarship that this and kindred subjects have not yet found special students, but have been left in the hands of writers whose very profession tempts them to subordinate strict truth to "edification"—only then will educated Englishmen be able to render more enlightened

homage to the undoubted virtues of the earlier monks, while clearly distinguishing them from those who formed too large a proportion of the communities suppressed by Henry VIII. Nothing is so wasteful as untruth, even in the holiest of causes: and the rancorous anti-clericalism of modern France, Italy, and Spain, is directly traceable to the incurable propensity of the Romanist clergy, medieval or modern, "to edit history in their own favour," as Dr. Barry puts it with characteristic tenderness.[1]

It only remains for me to mention a popular book on "English Monasteries" (reprinted from a series of anonymous articles in the *Church Times*), which, with much show of evidence from the Registers, relies almost wholly on Dr. Gasquet for its most important statements. I challenged the anonymous author some six months ago to correspond with me publicly on crucial points on which he seemed to mis-state the plain facts. He kept a discreet silence; but, even now, in case Abbot Gasquet should decline my offer of eight free pages on this subject, I willingly offer them to the author of "The English Monasteries," without asking him to break his resolution of anonymity. Failing him, I am ready to extend the same hospitality to any writer for the Catholic Truth Society; any well-known Romanist apologist like Messrs. Wilfrid Ward or W. S. Lilly; or, indeed, anyone else who can claim to have actually studied the Visitation records.

1. I may here mention that I have four times already offered to print at my own expense anything which prominent Romanists may have to say in defence of the false facts and false inferences by means of which they are constantly attempting to whitewash medieval morals in comparison with those of the present century. On separate occasions I have publicly singled out the Secretary of the Catholic Truth Society, Father Gerard, S.J., Canon Courtenay of Exeter, Dr. W. Barry, of Dorchester, as lending themselves to these falsehoods, intentional or unintentional; and have challenged them to bring their assertions to the test of a comparison with medieval witnesses from their own church. Not one of these gentlemen, so far as I am aware, has accepted a challenge which, if they had real faith in their own assertions, they would have been only too glad to take up. Few Englishmen even remotely realize the "appalling indifference to truth" fostered by that habit of burking all inconvenient objections which is too common among all denominations, but which in the Roman Church has been worked by the steady practice and the gradual refinements of ten centuries into an exquisite art.

2.

Guelf and Ghibelline.

WHEN the real social history of the 13th century comes to be written, free use will be made of that astonishingly frank autobiography which the Franciscan Salimbene wrote to edify the Franciscan nun, his niece, and which will be printed this year for the first time in anything like its entirety. Not that Salimbene (as I have said elsewhere[1]), tells us anything of first-rate importance which the specialist cannot clearly infer from other less interesting documents: but he has the supreme gift of clothing in visible flesh and blood those strange creatures, already so incredible to us their descendants, whose dry and disjointed bones are to be found in all the records of the middle ages. Dull annals and collections of miracles, city statutes and ascetic handbooks, Bishops' registers, legal records, even bills and account books, yield to the patient student plain indications of a civilization into which most of us can scarcely think ourselves back: but Salimbene alone enables us to visualize almost every class of society in his day (1222-1288). And, picturesque as he is, he is extremely accurate for a medieval writer: on every point of real importance he is abundantly corroborated by the soberest contemporary records.

Perhaps the most striking figures in the *Inferno* are the great Guelf and Ghibelline leaders. We find them in the Tombs of Fire or the River of Blood, or bound to their trees of anguish in the Forest of the Harpies; and we long to know more of their life on earth. What brought these great soldiers and statesmen to this dolorous pass? By what soft temptations, what mad passions, what fatal pressure of circumstances, did Satan gain such empire over these souls for whom Christ died? Our footnotes give us a few dry sentences with a couple of dates; and even Benvenuto da Imola, the great collector of Dante legends, too often fails us in our sorest need. The real commentator on Dante is Salimbene, not only directly by what he tells us of actual actors in the *Commedia*, but still more by

1. *Nineteenth Century and After.* June, 1905.

his living portraits of their compeers. I propose to give here a few of his typical stories of Guelf or Ghibelline leaders, as nearly as possible in his own words. Only so can the student without opportunities for special research realize what manner of men were the leaders in those incessant wars which made Italy a "hostelry of pain," not only in Dante's lifetime, but long before, and long after.

The chief Ghibelline figure is of course the Emperor Frederick II, whom Salimbene long believed to be Antichrist in the flesh. Of his cruelty and infidelity he has more stories than I can find room for here. But more cruel still was Ezzelino da Romano, whom our good friar believed to be the devil's specially chosen servant, as St. Francis had been the special servant of God. "I firmly believe that no such evil man ever lived, from the beginning of the world unto our own days: to please him the father would pursue and slay his son, and the son his father or any of his kinsfolk. He destroyed all the greatest men in the Mark of Treviso; and he would submit ladies to the foulest mutilations." But the catalogue of Ezzelino's crimes is common in chronicles of the time.

Only one degree less fiendish was his brother, Alberigo, whose deathbed repentance and horrible fate probably moved Dante to spare him the tortures of the River of Blood. "He was indeed a limb of Satan and a son of iniquity," writes Salimbene; "but he died an evil death with his sons and daughters. For those who slew them tore the legs and arms of his little sons from their living bodies, in the sight of their parents, and therewith they smote the fathers' and mother's mouths. Afterwards they bound his wife and daughters to stakes and burned them, though they were noble maidens, and the fairest in the world, and guiltless: yet men so hated their parents that they would not spare their innocence. For the father and mother had brought terrible evil and horrible affliction on the Mark of Treviso: wherefore men came to Alberigo with pincers, and there in the market-place each tore a piece from his living flesh; thus they destroyed his body in mockery and scorn and grievous torments. For he had slain this man's cousin, that man's brother, another's father or son: moreover, he had laid so grievous taxes and fines on that land that they must needs tear down their own houses and lay the boards and beams and chests and casks and barrels on barges, and send them for sale to Ferrara, that they might have money to pay the taxes and redeem themselves. This I saw with my own eyes. . . . . Moreover in one day he hanged 25 of the greatest men of Treviso, who had in nowise offended or harmed him. . . . . And at the same time he caused 30 noble ladies, their wives and daughters and sisters, to come and see them and to be seen of them while they were hanged; moreover, he would have cut off the ladies' noses, but this was spared them by the grace of one whom he called his bastard son, but who was not. Yet even so their garments were cut away in

the most foul and shameful wise[1]; and they were thus shown to the men who were to be hanged. And these were hanged so near to the ground that the ladies were driven among their feet: and they in the bitterness of their soul smote the ladies' faces as they died with their legs and feet: whose life was but pain and anguish to them for this foul mockery. After this, Alberigo caused them to be ferried over the river Sila, that they might go whither they would; and with the shreds of garments which were left they bound themselves about the middle like wild folk; and all that day they went 15 miles through an untilled land, among thorns and briars and nettles and burrs and pricks and thistles, while the flies stung their bare bodies; and thus they went weeping, as indeed they had cause; and withal they had nought to eat. They came that day, about nightfall, to the lagoons of the Venetian Sea: and behold! they were aware all at once of a fisher alone in his little boat, to whom they cried for help: but he was sore afraid, thinking to see some diabolical illusion, or a crew of spirits, or monsters of the sea at least; but at last by God's grace, and for their instant prayers, he came to them. So when they had told their whole story and all their woes, he said 'I pity you sore, nor will I leave you till God give you help: yet, since my little boat may bear but one at a time, therefore will I bring you one by one and set you down on dry land in Saldino; for if ye should stay here this night the wolves would devour you. Then on the morrow, before daybreak, I will get me a greater boat and bring you to St. Mark's church at Venice; where I hope God will give you help.' In brief, he brought all over but one, the last, whom he led to his fisher's hut and fed to her heart's content, and treated her with all kindness and courtesy and humanity and charity and honesty: and on the morrow he exactly fulfilled all his promises. So when he had brought them into St. Mark's church, he came to the Lord Ottaviano, Cardinal of the Roman Court and Legate in Lombardy, who at that time was at Venice; to whom he told the whole tale of these ladies and of their misfortunes, and where they now were. So the Cardinal came forthwith to them and gave them to eat; and he sent word throughout the whole city that all should come to him swiftly and hastily without delay in the church of St. Mark: both men and women, small and great, young men and maidens, old men and young: for he would tell them (he said) such things as they had never heard, and show them such sights as they had never seen. What then? swifter than the tale may be told, the whole city of Venice was gathered together to him on the Piazza of St. Mark, and from his lips they heard all the aforesaid story: and when he had finished speaking, he brought forward those ladies, in such foul array and such nakedness as that accursed Alberigo had devised to their dishonour; and this he did to

1. It is impossible to translate, either here or lower down, the revolting details of Salimbene's description.

provoke the citizens unto the greater hatred against that tyrant, and pity towards these ladies. So when the Venetians heard the story, and saw the ladies as naked as I have said, then they raised a great shout and cried, 'Let him die! let that accursed man die! Let him and his wife be burnt alive, and his whole seed be rooted out from this world.' . . . . Then, by the common consent of the whole city, both men and women, he preached a crusade against that accursed Alberigo. . . . . So they went with one mind against Alberigo and wrought him much evil, yet they destroyed him not utterly: howbeit within a short time after that crusade he was utterly destroyed with all his seed, and suffered justly the aforesaid mockery and torments and woes. For one day, having lost his hawk, and being under the open sky, he made so foul and boorish a gesture at the heaven, in sign of mockery and contumely and derision, thinking thereby to take vengeance on God, as may scarcely be told: moreover, when he was come home, he went forthwith into the church and defiled God's altar in such wise as may not be told, at that very spot where the Lord's Body is consecrated. Moreover his wife would call other noble ladies and matrons harlots and such like names, nor did her husband ever rebuke her and say, 'Wherefore sayest thou thus?' Nay rather, but he heeded it not, and she took heart from his heedlessness: so that was a just vengeance which the men of Treviso wreaked upon them. But after the Cardinal had ended his sermon to the Venetians, then he commended those ladies to the citizens as he would have commended himself: and they succoured them most liberally both in food and in clothing: moreover the men of Treviso spared that man by whose grace the ladies had not lost their noses, and they suffered him to live and did him much kindness, whereof he was worthy; for he oft-times restrained those tryants from many iniquities which they would have done."

This story of Alberigo is taken from a long digression in which Salimbene enumerates and characterises the worldly tyrants of his time. He then proceeds to give us the other side of the picture, and to estimate with his usual keen but sympathetic insight the Legates who had been commissioned by different Popes to champion the Church cause in Northern Italy. These portraits are of very exceptional value as coming from a convinced and consistent Churchman who had yet independence enough to write of things and men exactly as he saw them, and as they were frankly discussed within the ranks of the Guelf party. It is very difficult for a modern reader to realize XIII century society. But here and there even a single episode, told frankly and in detail, gives the intelligent reader just that double evidence which we require—the conviction, not only that the thing is true in itself, but also that it is characteristic of the times—no mere artificial museum-specimen, but a real natural growth, drifted down the ages to us, with the soil of its home still clinging to its roots.

Not all the atrocities of Gilles de Retz, who for fourteen years fed his tutelary devils with the blood and the dying groans of one hundred and forty innocent children, are half so damning to XV century society as the collateral evidence of the equanimity with which his crimes were so long suffered, of his own firm trust to meet his accomplice in Paradise, and of the tenderness with which his bones were brought by "damsels of high estate," to be buried honourably with the Carmelite friars of Nantes. (Michelet. Hist. de France l. xi. c. l.) Even the sickening atrocities of Alberigo, and the no less sickening reprisals of his victims, carry in themselves less demonstrative force than the matter-of-course way in which Salimbene, a nobleman by birth and a man of Religion by profession, records how the victims were paraded before the crowd in their naked shame, until the Venetian citizens were sufficiently wrought up to the Holy War. Wife-beating indeed meets us everywhere in high medieval society: but the general reader has seldom a chance of realising how little regard that society paid to all the finer feelings of women. So, again, many students to whom the Inferno has given an inkling of the real life of the tyrants, and who have a clear enough general recollection that Dante saw grave faults in the Church of his time, may yet be surprised at these figures of Church champions drawn by Salimbene from the life. He describes in chronological order the twelve Papal Legates who, during his lifetime, had championed the Church cause in Italy. The first was Ugolino, friend and protector of St. Francis, and later Pope Gregory IX. The next was "The Cardinal" *par excellence*, Ottaviano, into whose mouth later chroniclers put the despairing cry, "if there be such a thing as a soul, then I have lost mine for the Ghibellines!" Salimbene had dined more than once with him, and has much to say of his worldly wisdom. "Moreover, it was said of this same Cardinal that he was the son of the Lord Pope Gregory IX; perchance for that he had loved him with special love. I have also seen the daughter of this Cardinal, a nun in a certain convent: and she invited and prayed me instantly to be her spiritual father, and she my spiritual daughter (*devotus* and *devota*). She knew not whose daughter she was, nor what a father she had. But I knew well, and answering said to her, 'I will not have thee for a friend, for the poet Patecchio saith, "It is a weariness when I cannot speak with her," meaning to say, "It is a weariness to have a lady-friend to whom her friend cannot speak," as thou art, being enclosed in a convent. And she said to me, 'Even if we may not converse together, at least let us love each other in heart, and pray mutually for each other's salvation, as St. James saith in his last chapter (v. 16).' And I thought within myself that she would have drawn me in little by little, and entangled me, that I might love her: so I told her the example of the blessed Arsenius." The reference is to St. Jerome's "Lives of the Fathers" (pt. II. c. 61.) The aged Arsenius was

visited in his desert cell by a noble Roman lady, who had dared the perils of the deep and of the wilderness to look once upon his face. She fell at his feet: but he rebuked her intrusion with such asperity, that she dared not even look up, and could only falter, "I beseech thee, pray for me and deign to bear me in mind." "I pray to God," replied the Saint, "that He may blot all memory of thee from my soul." She was cut to the heart, went home, took to her bed and longed to die. Her own bishop, however, cured her by pointing out how subtle a flattery the Saint's rudeness implied to her charms; and we may perhaps hope that the same reflection consoled Salimbene's fair friend. The next Legate whom he describes is Gregory of Montelungo, to whose military genius and orthodoxy he pays a high tribute, but whose morals were even less irreproachable than those of Ottaviano. This leads our friar to remark that "many of these secular clergy who have lordships and prelacies, and live in delights, seem to care little for chastity; and they put into the Apostle Paul's mouth that he said, 'though not chastely, yet at least cautiously.' But the Apostle wrote not thus: rather he wrote, 'if they cannot contain, let them marry.' This I write, because certain worldly clerics, who desire to live after the flesh, teach the people this crazy falsehood, as though the Apostle had written, "though not in chastity, yet at least cautiously.' Methinks I have heard them say it a hundred times." This passage throws no less light on XIII century Bible knowledge than on clerical morals.

Of the next Legate, whom he knew far more intimately, our friar has still more to say. "After Gregorio da Montelungo the Lord Philip (Fontana), by the grace of God and of the Pope Archbishop of the holy church of Ravenna, was made Legate of the Apostolic See . . . . . Now this Legate was born in Tuscany in the district of Pistoia, and being yet a poor scholar he came to the city of Toledo, desiring to learn the art of necromancy. And as he sat one day in that city under a portico, a certain knight asked him what he sought. So when he said he was a Lombard, and why he was come thither, the knight led him to a certain great master of that art, an old man of hideous aspect with a hood over his head, to whom the knight recommended him, begging the necromancer for his sake to instruct this stranger in his art. The old man led him therefore into his chamber, and gave him a book, saying, "When I am gone from thee thou must stay and study here." Then departing from him, he diligently closed the door, and the whole chamber. So as that youth read in the book, suddenly there appeared demons of manifold kinds and shapes; for all seemed full of mice, cats, dogs, and pigs, which ran tumultuously hither and thither through the chamber. And forasmuch as he spake nothing to them, suddenly he found himself sitting outside the chamber in the street; and the Master came and said to him, "What dost thou here, son?" Then he told the Master what had

befallen him, so that the old man brought him again into the chamber, and departed from him as before, and locked the door with care. And as he read, there appeared a multitude of boys and girls, running hither and thither through the chamber. Forasmuch as again he spoke nought to them, he again found himself sitting without in the street; wherefore his Master said: "Ye Lombards are unfit for this art; leave it to us Spaniards, who are fierce men. and like unto demons. But thou, son, go to Paris, and study in Holy Scripture; for thou shalt yet be a mighty man in the Church of God." So he went and studied at Paris, and learned excellently, and returned to Lombardy and dwelt at Ferrara with the Bishop of Garsendino, who was one of the sons of Manfred of Modena, and brother of the Abbot of Pomposia. And the Bishop made him his chamberlain; and after his death another Bishop was elected, after whom this Philip was elected Bishop of Ferrara, and remained many years Bishop Elect, until he was made Bishop of Ravenna And when Pope Innocent IV came from Lyons to Ferrara, this Bishop there . . . . . [Here some scandalised reader has torn a leaf out of the manuscript, which (as we learn from the ancient table of contents) related "how a certain nun disposed in her heart to forsake God unless He should come to her succour: also how God consoles His friends." The text then proceeds:] "It came to pass therefore at the time when kings go forth to war, that the Lord Philip, Archbishop of Ravenna, having been made Legate by the Lord Pope, came to Ferrara. (Now that which men call "the time when kings go forth to war" is the month of May, for then the weather is quiet and jocund and temperate, wherein the nightingale tunes her song, and grass is found abundantly for oxen and horses). The Legate then, being at Ferrara, gathered together all the citizens of that city and strangers from Padua, and preached from the great door of the Cathedral church of St. George, opposite to the church of San Romano. And all the monks and friars were there and all folk of the city, both great and small; for they hoped to hear great marvels of God. Moreover, I also was by the Archbishop's side, and Buongiorno the Jew, who was my familiar friend, sat by my side, for he also would fain listen. The Legate therefore, standing in the gate of the Lord's house, began to preach in a loud voice, saying briefly that the time for words was now past, and we must keep silence, for the time is come to do those deeds which words do but represent. And he published how he had been made Legate by the Lord Pope against Ezzelino da Romano, and how he would fain raise an army of Crusaders to recover the city of Padua, and restore the expelled Paduans. And whosoever would be of his army in that expedition should have Indulgence and remission and absolution of all his sins. "And let none say: 'It is impossible for us to fight against that man of the Devil whom even demons fear,' for it shall not be impossible with God, who will fight for us." And the Legate added, "I say to

you, to the honour and praise of God Almighty, and of the blessed Peter and Paul, his Apostles, and likewise of the blessed Anthony, whose body is held in veneration at Padua, that if I had in my army none but the orphans, the wards and the widows, and the rest who have been afflicted by this man Ezzelino, yet even with these I would hope to have the victory over that limb of Satan and son of iniquity. For now the cry of his wickedness is gone up to Heaven, and therefore they shall fight from Heaven against him." When then he had finished his speech his hearers rejoiced: and he gathered together an army, and in due time marched forward to assault the city of Padua, which Ezzelino had most strongly fortified, garrisoning it with 1,500 knights, all stout men and skilled in war. Yet he himself dwelt elsewhere, for he feared as little for Padua as God fears lest the sky should fall, especially since the city had three rings of walls, and a moat both within and without, besides the knights and a multitude of people. For he held the Legate's army, with regard to their fitness to storm such a city, as a mere unarmed rabble without either courage or skill in war. Yet in that army there was a certain lay-brother of the Order of Friars Minor, a Paduan by birth, called Clarello, whom I have seen and known well, who was a man of great courage, and whose heart's desire was that the Paduans who had long been in exile should return now to their city. Seeing then that this occasion was favourable to him, and knowing how God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, he undertook to be the standard-bearer of that army, if haply God would give them salvation through his hand. Wherefore he strode before the army and found a peasant there with three mares, whereof he took one by force and, mounting it, caught in one hand a pole to serve him for a lance, and began to gallop hither and thither, shouting valiantly, "Ho! ye soldiers of Christ! Ho! ye soldiers of the blessed Peter! Ho! ye soldiers of the blessed Anthony! Cast away fear from you, be strong in the Lord." In brief, the army was so cheered and comforted by these words of his that it was ready to follow him whithersoever he might go; and thus cried Brother Clarello, "On! On! At them! At them! Salvation is the Lord's. Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered!" So the army followed him as its herald and standard-bearer, and set itself to storm the city. But the Lord struck fear into the hearts of those that were within, so that they dared not resist. For there was in the army another lay brother, also of the Friars Minor, a holy man and devout, who in the world had been the lord Ezzelino's master-engineer, to build his machines and catapults and mangonels and battering rams, for the storming of cities and castles. Him the Legate commanded by holy obedience to strip off the habit of St. Francis (for the Legate loved that Order), and to put on a white habit, and build such an engine as might enable them to take the city by storm. So the Friar humbly obeyed him, and forthwith

built an engine which in front was all fire, and behind was full of armed men; and the city was soon taken. Then the Church party, when they had entered the city, would neither hurt any in the city, nor did they slay nor take prisoners nor spoil goods, nor carry away anything; but they spared all men and let them go free. And the others held themselves happy in their mere freedom from prison and other harm; so the whole city exulted and rejoiced.[1]

The Legate therefore, although his name had been renowned even before this time, yet was he far more renowned after the capture of the city of Padua. In old days he had been Legate in Germany, by reason of the Landgrave who had been made Emperor after Frederick's deposition. And at this time there were in Germany three Provinces, wherein were certain brethren of great dignity [*solemnes*,] who, despising the discipline of the Order, would not obey the Ministers; and when they came to consult this Legate, he took them and handed them over to the power of the Ministers, that they might exercise judgment and justice on them according as the statutes of the Order demanded.[2]

Now it came to pass that the Landgrave died; and the Legate, being in another city, and hearing of the death of the Landgrave, feared Frederick's son, Conrad, who caused Germany to be most strictly guarded. He commanded therefore one of his household on no account to open his chamber to any man for several days; for he purposed to flee, lest he should be utterly taken. Then, changing his garments, and taking with him a single comrade only, he came furtively and secretly to a convent of the Friars Minor, where he called the Guardian apart, and said to him, "Knowest thou me?" And he answered, "Truly, nay!" Then said the Legate, "I know thee well: and I command thee by holy obedience to keep in thine own bosom all that I shall tell thee, and to disclose it to none until I shall give thee leave; and to speak to no man but in my presence, and never in thy native German, but ever in the Latin tongue. The Landgrave is dead, and I am the Legate. Thou shalt therefore give me and my comrade a habit of the Order, and without delay thou shalt give me means to flee, and lead me to a safe place, that I be not taken by Conrad." To be brief, all this was done obediently and gladly; but when the Guardian would have led them forth from the city, he found one gate shut, and likewise the second and the third: yet through the third, by a space which was beneath the gate, they saw a great dog

1. This too favourable description, which Salimbene no doubt heard as a tradition in the Order, is in direct variance with the accounts of eye-witnesses, themselves of the Church party. (Murat. Scriptt. tom. VIII. 299 and 694). Only five men were murdered, but "the violent plunder of the houses was more than can be described or imagined."

2. These were the Friars who clung to the original Franciscanism of the *Fioretti* and the *Mirror of Perfection*, and who resisted the relaxations introduced by Brother Elias. It is from Salimbene alone that we learn the character of the Legate who compelled the German province to conform to these relaxations.

creep out, and it seemed to them that this was the only way whereby they also might pass. But when they attempted it, it was found that the Legate was too fat to pass through ; but the Guardian stood upon his body, and flattened him by stamping it to the ground, and thus he crept forth. When therefore all four were gone forth, they passed on and came that day to dinner at a certain city, wherein was a Convent of Friars Minor. And when these asked of the Guardian who were these friends whom he brought with him, he answered, " They are great Lombards. For God's sake show them charity and courtesy, and do them service. . . . . ." So the guardian of that house came with ten brethren of the Convent, and ate with them in the Guest-house with the greatest familiarity and solace, being much comforted to have such guests. When therefore the Legate saw that he was in a safe place, and had escaped all perils, at the end of dinner he gave leave to the Guardian his guide and fellow-traveller to make him known. Then that stranger-guardian who had travelled with him, said to the brethren, " Know, dearest friends, that this Brother with whom ye have eaten is the Legate of the Lord Pope, and therefore have I brought him to you, for that the Landgrave is dead, and here at last we have no further fear of Conrad. But even the comrade who travelled with me has known none of these things until this very hour." The brethren, hearing this, began to tremble as a reed when it is shaken with the water. But the Legate said to them, " Fear not, brethren ! I know you, that ye have God's love in you ; ye have busily ministered to us, ye have shown us courtesy and charity and familiarity ; the Lord repay you ! I was even heretofore a friend to the Order of St. Francis : and that friendship will I now hold fast all the days of my life." And so in truth it was. For he gave to the Friars Minor the church of St. Peter the Great at Ravenna,[1] and granted us every favour which we sought from him, of preaching, of hearing confessions, and of absolving from all cases of conscience which were reserved for himself. He had a terrible and savage household, yet they all revered the Friars Minor as apostles of Christ, knowing that their lord loved us dearly. For they were full forty men-at-arms, whom he ever led with him, to be guardians of his life and person ; and they feared him as they feared the Devil. Nay, Ezzelino da Romano was scarcely less feared : for he gave his servants most grievous punishments. One day as he went from Ravenna to Argenta (which is the Archiepiscopal palace), he caused one of his servants to be bound with a rope and plunged into the water, and thus they dragged him bound to the ship through the rolling waves, as though he were a sturgeon, because he had forgotten to bring salt. Another time he caused a certain other servant to be bound to a great pole and turned, as on a spit, before the fire ; and when the men of his household wept for him with pity and compassion, the Legate, seeing

1. In which Dante was buried later on.

the cruel sight, said to them, "Poor wretches! Do ye weep so soon?" and so bade that he should be taken away from the fire. Yet the man had already borne bitter anguish of soul and much roasting. Moreover, the Legate cast into chains a certain Amanato, his steward, a Tuscan; and the rats devoured him in the prison, for he was accused of having wasted his master's goods. Many other cruelties he practised on those who were of his household, for his own vengeance and their punishment, and to strike fear into others. And therefore God suffered him to be taken, while he was yet Legate, by Ezzelino, who kept him carefully, and took him whithersoever he went, that he might the more carefully guard him. Yet he treated him with honour and reverence, although he had taken Padua from him. But He who liberated Manasses from his dungeon and restored him to his kingdom, liberated likewise this Legate in the manner following. A certain man of Reggio, named Gerardo de' Campsori, drew him forth from Ezzelino's dungeon and let him down by a rope from an upper chamber: and so he escaped in the Lord's name from Ezzelino's hands. But he was not unmindful of this loving kindness, but repaid the same man by making him a Cardinal[1] of Ravenna. Moreover, to Brother Enverardo of Brescia, a great Lector of the Order of Friars Minor, he gave the bishopric of Cesena, for that he was of his household, and had been taken prisoner with him; which Brother Enverardo, after the death of Ezzelino, was freed from prison with all the other prisoners whom that accursed tyrant kept in ward. Moreover, this aforesaid Archbishop (of Ravenna) had two nephews, Francis and Philip; but Philip was his own son, and was twenty-five or thirty years old, comely and fair as a second Absalom; and this Lord Philip, Archbishop of Ravenna, and Legate of the Roman court, loved him as his own soul. Whoever therefore was willing to fill the hands of these two men with gifts might have a prebend or whatsoever he demanded from the Archbishop; and thus they became rich beyond measure. He had also a fair daughter, whom he would have given to wife to the Lord Jacopo di Bernando: but he would not take her, both because she was not of lawful birth, and for that he would not take a dowry of Church goods, and also because he purposed to become a Friar Minor and die in that Order, as in truth he did. Moreover, the said Archbishop was sometimes so melancholy and gloomy and furious, and such a son of Belial, that none could speak with him. But to me he was always kind and familiar and courteous and liberal; for he gave me the relics of the blessed Eliseus, of whom we read in the Book of Kings, which were in a certain city called Cæsarea, hard by Ravenna, in the Monastery of St. Lawrence, in a stone coffin within the royal chapel; and I carried off the principal and greatest bones of that body, and placed them within the high

1. *i.e.* a Canon of the Cathedral. For the gradual steps by which this word has come to be used exclusively of dignitaries of the Roman court, see Ducange s.v.

altar of the Friars Minor at Parma, where they are even unto this day, with the following epitaph, besides that which they had affixed first in leaden letters :—

Hic virtute Dei—patris ossa manent Helysei,
Quæ Salimbene—detulit ossa bene.

But I could not have the head of Eliseus, because the Austin friars had stolen it and carried it away unbidden. For the Archbishop cared more for war than for relics of Saints. Once when he was Legate he came to Faenza, where I then dwelt : and because he needed to enter a convent of the Order of St. Clara, and the Abbess wished to speak long with him, he sent for some brethren to be his comrades, both for honesty's sake and for his own honour. For he loved honour above all men in the world, as my judgment goes ; and above all men in the world he knew how to lord it and play the baron, as I have heard from others, and as it seemed to me likewise. We were therefore ten brethren that bare him company ; and after we had warmed ourselves by the fire (for it was a Saturday morning in the month of January, on the feast of St. Timothy), he robed himself in sacerdotal vestments, that he might enter the Convent decently and honestly. And when he would have put on his alb, and found it too close in the sleeves, he was troubled. And the Bishop of Faenza said to him, " It is not close for me, for I put it on easily." To whom the Archbishop said, " How ! Is this alb thine ?" " It is mine," said the Bishop. " And where then is mine ?" said the Archbishop ; and presently it was found that one of his servants had carried it to Ravenna. And the Archbishop said, " In truth, I wonder much at mine own long-suffering, yet will I give him punishment ! I cannot inflict it here in his absence ; but delay is no robbery !" And I said to the Archbishop, " Have patience, Father, for ' patience hath her perfect work.' And the Wise Man saith ' By patience a prince shall be appeased, and a soft tongue shall break harness.' " Then the Archbishop said, " The Wise Man saith also in the xiii chapter of Proverbs ' He that spareth the rod hateth his son ; but he that loveth him correcteth him betimes.' "[1] I, seeing that the Archbishop was wholly purposed in his own heart to punish the offender, said, " Father, let us leave these words and speak of another matter. Do you celebrate ?" And he said, " No, I will that thou sing mass." And I said to him, " I will obey you and sing Mass." Then said the Archbishop, " Will ye that I prophesy to you of the Pope to be ?" (for the Papacy had been vacant since the death of Pope Urban IV of Troyes.) And we said, " Yea, Father, tell us who shall be Pope." And he said ; " Pope Gregory IX loved much the Order of St. Francis. Now shall succeed Gregory X, who shall dearly love the Friars Minor." (For he thought to speak thus

1. This text was taken in the Middle Ages to apply equally to servants: See the Moral Tales of the Franciscan Nicole Bozon. p. 25.

of himself; for he desired much to have the Papacy, and even hoped it; both because he was a friend of the Friars Minor, and because the master of necromancy at Toledo had foretold that he would be great in the Church of God, and also because he saw himself already great, and that sometimes the Cardinals were at discord in the Papal election, and that at times men spake his name in this matter.) Then I answered and said, "Father, if the Lord will, you will be that Gregory X: and you have loved us, and will love us yet more." Yet it came not thus to pass; for no Gregory X succeeded then, but Clement IV; nor did this Archbishop of Ravenna ever come to the Papacy. So when this Archbishop and Legate had spoken the aforesaid words, he added, "These are they who shall enter the Convent: firstly, all the Friars who are here; then, of mine own company, let none enter but the Bishop of Faenza, the Archdeacon of Ravenna, and the Podesta of this city." When therefore we were come to the door of the church, we found there a lay-brother with a smoking censer, and when he had censed the Legate the latter took the censer from his hands, and censed each friar as he entered the church, saying thrice, "*de licenso ali frati me*," which being interpreted is "Incense to my Brethren." Then we went to the stairs, and he leant on me, for honour's sake and for help, both in mounting and descending; so that I held up his right arm, and the Archdeacon of Ravenna his left. And the church was on an upper floor, and the whole Convent of those ladies, to the number of 72, was there gathered together; and after Mass had been solemnly celebrated, and all our council and business was ended, we went out from the Convent and found a plenteous fire kindled. And forthwith the bell ran to Nones, and the Legate took leave, and said, "I invite ye all to dine with me." I believe that he said full ten times over in the Tuscan tongue, "*mo e' ve 'nvito, e si ve renvito.*" which is, being translated, "I invite you to dinner, and again I reinvite you." Nevertheless those brethren were so fearful and shamefaced that I could not bring with me but two; the rest went to eat in the Convent of the Brethren. When therefore I had come to the Bishop's palace, the Legate said to me, "To-day is the Sabbath-day, and the Bishop and Podesta will [not] eat flesh. Let us part from them, and go to the hall of the Palace, where we shall have abundantly to eat." And he kept me and made me sit by his side at table; and oft-times he said how he took it exceeding ill that I had not honoured him by bringing other Brethren with me; for he had invited them all. And I dared not tell him that they would not come, for he would have taken it too ill; but I told him that another time he should have the whole Convent. For he rejoiced much when men honoured him. Moreover the Archdeacon bare us company, and sat at a lower table by himself; but he was my friend and acquaintance and sent me a present."

Here follows a long digression on the Council of Ravenna, in which

Philip, despite his own lax morals, stoutly supported the Friars in their attempt to reform the morals of the parish clergy. Salimbene speaks again of his hopes of the Papacy, and their repeated disappointments; and he gives a pathetic picture of the great man's last days. "So the Lord Philip, Archbishop of Ravenna, after that he had fought many fights and gained many victories, became aged and weighed down with years and fell sick of the sickness whereof he died. And, wishing to die in his own land, he let himself be carried on a wooden litter by twenty men, ten and ten by relays; and when he came to Imola, he would fain stay in the Convent of the Friars Minor, where at that time I dwelt; and we gave him the whole Refectory to himself, and he stayed with us but one day. And when he was come to Pistoia, he sent for Brother Thomas of Pavia, who was his acquaintance and friend of old, and confessed to him and ordered well for the salvation of his soul; and so he rested in peace, and was buried in the church of the Friars Minor at Pistoia. . . . . Moreover, this Lord Philip, Archbishop of Ravenna, who was the Lord Pope's Legate, when he was in his villa called Argenta on the banks of the Po, and when he went to and fro through his palace, was wont to go singing some responsory or antiphon in praise of the glorious Virgin, from one corner to another of that palace. And in summer time he would drink at each corner; for at each corner of the palace he had a pitcher of excellent and noble wine in the coldest water. For he was a mighty drinker, and loved not water with his wine, wherefore also he loved much the Treatise which Primas wrote against mixing water with wine."

The next Legate again was "a mighty drinker," and not unnaturally subject to fits of religious depression. He had been a personal friend of Salimbene's eldest brother; and one day our autobiographer sat a long while with him in the palace where he lodged on his way through Ravenna. The Legate rose at last and went to the window: "Where, then, is your convent, Brother Salimbene?" "Then I pointed it out to him: a great church with a tall campanile like the donjon-tower of a fortress," in the shadow of which Dante's bones still lie. "Then said the Bishop, 'Do you believe, Brother Salimbene, that we bishops can come to heaven—we who are in so many labours and cares and anxieties by reason of the flocks committed to us—unless you Religious, who are in familiar converse with God, help us with your frocks and hoods?' Then I quoted Scripture for his comfort; and the Bishop answered, 'God reward you, Brother, for you have brought me exceeding great comfort.'" The next Legate was a learned man of whom we hear nothing but good. The two next were former Papal chaplains, good men of business both and clever politicians. The second managed to oust Dante's Buoso da Duera from Cremona. "This Legate was followed by one Cardinal Latino, a young man and lean of flesh, . . . whom

Pope Nicholas IV had made Cardinal and Legate for his kindred's sake. . . . He troubled all the ladies with a certain Constitution which he promulgated, wherein it was written that all women should have garments of length to reach to the ground, and only the measure of a single palm further; for before this they trailed along the ground tails of garments a whole ell and a half long. . . . And the Bishop caused this Constitution to be preached in all the churches, and imposed it strictly upon the women, and that no priest might absolve them of their sins but if they obeyed; which to the women was bitterer than any death. For a certain lady told me in familiar talk that this tail was dearer to her than the whole of the rest of the garments wherewith she was clad. Moreover, the Cardinal enjoined that all women, both maidens and noble damsels, married and widows and matrons, should wear veils on their heads, which was horribly grievous to them. Yet for that tribulation they found a remedy, which for their tails they could not; for they caused their veils to be made of fine muslin and silk inwoven with gold, wherein they showed ten times fairer than before, and drew beholders' eyes all the more to wantonness." The twelfth and last Legate was the creation of Martin IV, and his willing instrument in those wars of aggrandisement in which he wasted such incalculable blood and treasure. Salimbene constantly speaks with horror of this slaughter and waste; he tells us that the Pope spent "1,400,000 golden florins, which sum was from the tithes of all the churches which Pope Gregory X had gathered for the succour of the Holy Land, and which was thus diverted from its true purpose." "These twelve abovenamed," he adds, "were the most noble Legates and Princes of the Church whom the Pope sent into Lombardy and Romagna, not only for the salvation of men's souls, but also against the wiles of that Dragon, the Emperor Frederick, who strove with his princes and followers to overthrow the liberty of the Church, and to corrupt the unity of the faithful." The remedy, however, was not so much more tolerable than the disease; and we can well understand the complaint which our Friar ascribes to the monks of Cluny: "The Pope's Legates rob the churches so far as in them lies, and carry off whatsoever they can."

It is a very false and superficial view of the XIII century which represents it only as an age of settled institutions, clear-cut convictions and majestic repose. The real greatness of that age lay not in its finality, but in its imperfection and consciousness of imperfection: in its ferments, its struggles, its groaning and travailing in pain for a redemption which has come only partially with succeeding ages. The men who lived in that century were thoroughly dissatisfied with it, and too often failed to gather the ripening harvest of the future because their eyes were fixed upon a purely fantastic past. Such vain regrets were excusable in an age when scientific history was

impossible[1]: but it is sad to see, even in our own age, how many refuse to face the emphatic teaching of the past, and cry for something more attractive or exciting than the plain truth. The highest poetry may indeed transcend fact, but not neglect it: and that lower literature which loses all its gloss in the light of common day is really only fit for the limbo to which Horace relegates all poetic mediocrities. St. Francis and Dante were great, not because they thought the world was growing steadily worse, but because they fought so bravely for their own generation: not in virtue of the facts they failed to see, but in virtue of the intense life they gave to such facts as they really grasped. All through the *Commedia*—even through the most charming Franciscan records, if we read them carefully—runs an undertone of wailing: "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" Salimbene, with all his freshness and childish delight in trifles, shows us more vividly than any other the horrors from which these men fought to escape: horrors already so unreal at the distance of 650 years that we of the twentieth century can safely afford to indulge our ingratitude to those souls through whose labours we find our own lines fallen in more pleasant places.

1. See an article by the present writer in the *Independent Review* for June, 1905.

SIDE-LIGHTS ON THE FRANCISCANS

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TO those who knew and loved St. Francis before M. Sabatier's *Life* gave such an impulse to Franciscan literature in England, the satisfaction which they feel in the saint's immense popularity is somewhat alloyed by the regret that this literature should run in so narrow a groove. Even in M. Sabatier's book, the light is concentrated too exclusively on the saint and his immediate disciples. We are indeed reminded, here and there, that the ordinary friar of the next generation was already of a very different type; but the story seldom passes beyond that first small group, and everyone seems to avoid the more complicated and laborious question: "What manner of man was the ordinary friar of the second generation?" And yet, until this question is at least approximately answered, we cannot really understand certain traits in the Founder's own character. Scientific history can never admit Goethe's poetic plea:

> "Ich brachte reines Feuer vom Altar,
> Was ich entzündet, ist nicht reine Flamme."

It is the sower's business to look well, not only to his seed, but to his soil; for soil will give the increase only by strict natural law, and a man's disciples are, in a sense, only his own thoughts and deeds writ large.

The medieval reaction of the last seventy years in England is, in many ways, a very curious phenomenon. In spite of the number of fine intellects which have led it, it has been far more a matter of sentiment than of logic. The impression that "they ordered these things better in the Middle Ages" prevails among the clergy in direct proportion to their ignorance of actual medieval life; while most laymen, bred under the tolerant traditions of ten generations of Protestantism, listen to pleas in favour of the old religion with the same half-contemptuous sympathy which they extend to the monks and nuns expelled from France. The current clerical conception of the Middle Ages is thus rather the product of a negative subtraction from modern life than of a positive synthesis from medieval facts. It is too often assumed

that to repudiate any tenet current among Nonconformists is necessarily to work back towards an older and purer Church; that, the less we sympathise with Bunyan and Baxter, the closer we must approach to St. Bernard or St. Bonaventura.

I will attempt here to show how mistaken this assumption is, and what true community of spirit may be found between the English Puritans and those friars who are generally assumed to stand at the very opposite religious pole. If I seem here to lay undue emphasis on the weaker side of the Franciscan movement, it is only that it now seems high time to protest against the growth among us of a Franciscan legend as unhealthily one-sided, in its own way, as that Napoleonic legend which renders so many Frenchmen incapable of understanding the real lessons of modern history. The *Fioretti,* the *Three Companions,* the *Mirror of Perfection,* are, in a sense, partisan manifestoes, and give us only one side of the truth. Thomas of Eccleston's idyllic descriptions refer, as he himself plainly tells us, to an earlier, heroic age, which had already passed away before he wrote, though this was only some thirty-five years after the Founder's death. To form an idea of the average friar, we must look wider afield—to the miscellaneous notices brought together in Wadding's collections, to the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals,* to the *Seven Tribulations* of Angelo Clareno, to the *Chronicle* of Salimbene, to the early Constitutions of the Order, and, above all, to the disciplinary writings of St. Bonaventura and his school. The most important of these have been published in a cheap form by the Fathers of Quaracchi, in two volumes which cost about half a crown each.

These little manuals aim at presenting complete codes of conduct for novices and full-fledged friars; and one's first feeling in reading them is one of gloom and depression. We are already far, indeed, from the real freedom of St. Francis—from that sense of open air and sunshine in God's world rather than the Devil's, and from an earth where a man may be cheerful without irreverence to greater realities beyond. The model friar of these books is a slave to the letter of the law in petty things, a man who sees danger and defilement everywhere in the world: in short, a Puritan in the invidious sense of the word. The discipline is the discipline of the quarter-deck: hold your tongue in your senior's presence; avoid addressing him by name if possible, and, in any case, never venture to pronounce the bare name "without the sign of his religious title"; never presume, however well-meaningly, to pat him familiarly on the head or the cheek. Rise up when he comes, and never dare to sit while he stands; put back your cowl when you speak to him; never cross the cloister-garth, while the friars are sitting there, "without due soberness

and decency in the disposition of thy limbs and of thy habit." Never "thou" and "thee" the senior Brother, except in places where, by the custom of the country, this constitutes no undue liberty.

But these, however petty and un-Franciscan, are among the least tyrannous of the precepts. The rules for religious deportment, as a whole, smack far less of the *Fioretti* than of Praise-God Barebones. The general precepts, it is true, merely inculcate an impossible theory of detachment from the world. "Keep thy heart," writes St. Bonaventura, after a passage of great beauty:

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, and let it be given up to spiritual exercises only; suffer no images of earthly things to leave their impress thereon, that so it may remain a stranger to all things created, and free to devote itself solely to its Creator."

Yet a detail here and there shows what this theory involves in practice: "Avoid all games, especially with the young . . . never speak a word to any man which is not premeditated, ordered, useful, and honest . . . wherever thou mayst be, avoid all women and beardless youths except for reasons of necessity or manifest profit . . . never have any spiritual familiarity with anyone, but behave thyself alike to all, so that none may be able to mark in thee any difference or special love for any: . . . avoid special civilities, friendships, and familiarities." But it is in the more detailed exposition of the same theme by St. Bonaventura's secretary Bernard of Besse, and by David of Augsburg, that Puritanism weighs upon us in all its self-imposed gloom. Every speech and gesture and action must be measured and calculated: no spontaneity, no Nature; for Nature is evil.

"Let not novices be easily moved to laughter," writes Bernard, ". . . tittering in general is a great disgrace to the gravity of a Religious. It is utterly despicable for a man of Religion to titter like a boy. No man of Religion should utter laughter with undisciplined lips, but show with a glad face the gladness of his heart."

There is a true ring of St. Francis about this last sentence: but the negative precept far outweighs the positive, as we may read in many other passages, and especially in one which Bernard quotes from his greater namesake.

"Trifles among worldly folk are mere trifles, but in the mouth of a Priest or a Religious they are blasphemies. If they are forced upon us, we must perchance suffer them, but never repeat them. To open thy mouth to such things is unlawful; to accustom it thereto is sacrilegious; it is base to be moved to tittering, and still baser to move another."

It must be noted that even the author of the *Mirror of Perfection* cannot quote St. Francis's love of cheerfulness without adding,

as a warning, that the saint never meant thereby to encourage laughter, which on the contrary he specially abhorred: "for he would that the servant of God should not only not laugh himself, but should not afford to others the least occasion for laughter." That even "we who were with him" could have written these words, shows clearly how rash is the common assumption that the saint's admirable combination of inward fervour and outward gladness was shared by his disciples as a body. Many were fervent in spirit, and many were merry of heart; but the fervent and the merry were soon at daggers drawn within the Order.

It is startling in this context to find an express warning against oaths; but the oath was, in the Middle Ages, as natural a garnish to conversation even to the churchman as it is to the modern soldier. Not only did Chaucer's Poor Parson incur the suspicion of Lollardy by his protest against profane language; but the same is gravely recorded as a common characteristic of heretics by a 13th century inquisitor. Eccleston, in his catalogue of the extraordinary virtues of the early friars in England, thinks it necessary to enumerate that they gave up all oaths in their speech. The novice, therefore, needs the serious reminder that

"to swear at one time by the Head, at another by the Saints, or in any other fashion, is most unbecoming of a disciple of Christ, Who saith, 'Let your speech be "yea, yea; no, no."' Among servants of God, there should be comparison of opinions; but no altercation, which is a perverse thing; especially if the mouth of a Religious be opened with damnable boldness to railing or curses (which, as the Apostle saith, exclude from God's Kingdom); or if he take the Devil's name in his speech, or use it often in common talk."

As Joinville remarked in the same generation: "I never heard [St. Louis] name the Devil, whose name is much used throughout the Kingdom, which I believe to be far from agreeable to God."

So far, then, so good; though we must remember how strongly all this would smack of the precisian to the worldling of those days, and what sad nicknames the French nobles did in fact give to St. Louis for his squeamishness on this and similar points. But readers of the *Fioretti* will be pained to find, not only that the novice is forbidden to jest, but also that he is exhorted to a truly Quakerish avoidance of civil worldly phrases in his letters and his speech. David would even forbid the conventional *How d'ye do?* "wherein is no true care for the health of him to whom they speak." It is true, this may be deduced logically enough from St. Francis' scruples about using the name "Good," and the common titles of "Father" or "Master"; and yet the saint himself would scarcely have pushed his logic so far. When once

such precepts are codified and registered, and imposed upon a whole Order of men, this can only result in a formalism worthy of the 17th century precisians. Moreover, the novice is bidden to pay the same minute and painful attention to the matter of speech as to its manner: the "D.V." and the perpetual "edification" of the Clapham sect are also the ideal of the model friar.

"In speaking of doubtful or future matters let them never speak without qualification, but always add some condition to assertions of this kind; for Religion alloweth not precise words concerning things indifferent. No man living hath it in his choice to say 'Yea' or 'No' without qualification, concerning things which are yet mere contingencies. . . . When thou art about to go forth among the public, forearm thyself, and purpose firmly in thy mind to abstain from empty words. Provide thyself, before going forth, with some useful matter wherefrom to weave thy speech if need be."

This, it is true, "condemns idle loquacity, not opportune affability;" but the line of demarcation depends so much on the individual mind! Here, for instance, is the talk prescribed to the brethren as they walk two and two.

"At that time they should beguile their toil by recounting examples of the Fathers, or any other good examples, which may either kindle their affections or at least instruct their intellect. It is most disgraceful to be unable to pass the time with any but frivolous and fabulous stories. Woe unto those who are silent of thee, O Lord; for the loquacious are dumb!"

Again

"Let friars beware of carrying news about, even though it be good and probable. It is unbecoming of Religious to be everywhere carriers of news. The falsehood which is very often in the report itself, or which is brought in by secular men who pass it on, is imputed to its first author. . . . Let them be honest and serious in their talk, not showing themselves worldly in worldly words, and such as move to laughter. A servant of God should speak of God, to fulfil the Scripture: 'if any speak, let him speak as it were the speeches of God': otherwise vain words disclose the vanity of the mind."

The same formality extended itself to prayers: "never pray without sighs" (or groans). The gift of tears in prayer was a frequent and much coveted sign of grace: he to whom it was not vouchsafed prayed to have it; for, after all, this is a Valley of Tears. St. Louis bitterly regretted that he could so seldom weep in prayer. The Blessed Umiliana, having lost for a while this gift of tears, nearly blinded herself by putting quicklime into her eyes to provoke the accustomed signs of grace. In spite of St. Francis and the *Fioretti*, 'God's Minstrels' are now forbidden even the solace of song.

"Let them not sing on their way, especially to secular airs, even though the words be good; for layfolk understand the bare sound only. And besides this, it befitteth not a Religious to raise his voice above the ordinary."

A vast amount of early Church music was adapted, like the Salvation Army Hymns, from secular music; St. Francis once took two lines of a popular song for the text of his sermon; Frate Elia was held to have shown his un-Franciscan spirit by grudging that the saint should sing so loud upon his deathbed. Yet already, in St. Bonaventura's days, the Puritan estimate of song is officially ratified. What a gulf lies between this and the holy freedom of the first days, when a scoffing knight was converted by hearing a friar sing as he trudged with bleeding feet through the snow! But those first friars had been real missionaries. What we find now is an Order, very jealous of its honour, and the more sensitive to the breath of scandal that its decay in real religion and popularity was already only too notorious.

Meanwhile, the more grievously the weightier matters of the law are omitted, and greater care is taken to pay the tithes of mint and anise and cummin. The smallest gestures are prescribed. "It is unbecoming in an honest and humble Friar to put his leg over his thigh, or to cross his feet in public, as he sits." He must utterly avoid all bodily games, as St. Bonaventura also commanded. For a friar "to take anyone, without necessity, by the hand or the girdle, to carry idly flowers, fruit, or a staff in his hand, or to twirl the end of his girdle round in his fingers, is not in accordance with seemly behaviour; nay, rather, it is to some extent a token of wantonness." "When they go among the laity let the modesty of discipline shine forth in their words, their walk, and their habit: let them speak briefly and little, let them cover their head decently, and hide their hands [in their sleeves], utterly avoiding to kiss, or touch the bare hand of any woman, however nearly related to them." For it would be difficult to overrate the prudery of the model friar, if prudery that may be called which had so real underlying reason. Again and again in the 13th and 14th centuries we find solemn repetitions of the ancient decrees which, for the avoidance of scandal, forbade a priest to live in the same house even with his mother or his sisters. It was one of the distinctive virtues of St. Louis of Toulouse that, after his conversion, he dared not kiss even his mother. Bernard of Besse specifies this as dangerous, with much more that is almost equally significant. The Blessed Clara of Montefalcone, a sainted Franciscan nun of the same 13th century, is commended for having refused to look at her brother unveiled, though he was himself a friar. She would never show an inch of her naked flesh, even to her doctor: and when once, in sleep, she had thrust one bare foot from under her gown, and her sister had told her of the fact, "she expiated it with many tears as a grievous act of impiety." What most distressed her contemporary, the Blessed Umiliana, on her death-

bed, was the thought that the crowd which would come to worship her corpse might kiss her naked feet. To avoid this danger, she caused her shoes and stockings to be drawn on while the breath was yet in her body.

Nor was the model Franciscan behind his sisters in these proprieties.

"When the friar washes his feet, he should avoid there, as elsewhere, to show his bare shins; nay, he should, with all the greater diligence, wrap his frock around him: for it is a disgrace for persons of Religion to be seen with naked flesh. Every honest [Religious] is careful that his bare flesh be never seen, save in case of manifest and compelling necessity We read of St. Antony that, when he needed to ford a river, he begged his fellow to withdraw somewhat from his sight, lest each should see the other's nakedness. His fellow withdrew, yet even then he was ashamed when he would have bared himself. And, as he thus pondered within himself, God's power bore him across to the further bank of the stream: for doubtless this honest thought of his was acceptable to the Lord."

It is told of a Dominican and a Cistercian monastery, and I think also of a Franciscan, that the Blessed Virgin came one night into the dormitory to see whether all was well, and was much shocked and embarrassed to find one friar showing his bare shins. Here again we are already far from the childlike simplicity of the first times. In the *Fioretti,* the Brethren show no such prudery: Ruffino preaches in a church "naked as he was born, save his drawers only"; and St. Francis joins him in the same condition. Juniper is more unconventional still: for the earlier version of the story expressly denies to him even the one scanty garment which the *Fioretti* leaves him; and on at least two occasions St. Francis also is recorded to have appeared in public without a single rag of covering. The hair shirt, with which Canon Rawnsley covers him in the Bishop's presence, is a mere piece of later prudery. The first free association of penitents and missioners founded by St. Francis soon became a Religious Order, and must perforce fall in with the old monastic routine, which is admirably illustrated by a story in Caesarius of Heisterbach.

"Ulrich, Abbot of Steinfeld. . . . rode abroad one day with one of the youths [who were reared in the monastery]; and, as they talked together, they met a fair maiden. The Abbot, of set purpose, reined in his steed and saluted her most ceremoniously: she in her turn stood still, and bent her head to return his salute. When, therefore, they were gone a little further, the Abbot, willing to tempt the youth, said: "Methinks that was a most comely maiden." "Believe me," replied the youth, "she was most comely in my eyes also." Whereupon the Abbot answered "she hath but one deformity, namely, that she hath but one eye!" "In truth, Lord," replied the youth, "she hath both her eyes; for I looked somewhat narrowly into her face." "And I," said the Abbot, moved to indignation, "will look narrowly into thy bare back. Thou shouldst have been too simple to know whether she was male or female."

The threat was publicly and solemnly fulfilled that very evening; and Caesarius presently goes on to extol the exceeding sanctity of a nun who, having lived in the convent from the age of seven years, "scarce knew the difference between a layman and a brute beast." So St. Douceline, one of the most remarkable saints of the 13th century, "knew no man by sight"; though, as a Béguine, she moved amongst her fellow-creatures. When a little girl of seven, who was in her Béguinage, looked at some workmen who were employed on the house, the ascetic saint "beat her most grievously, so that the blood ran down her ribs, telling her meanwhile that she would sacrifice her to God." To the strict Franciscans, the other sex existed only as a temptation, permitted by God's inscrutable providence. All their earliest disciplinary writings take up the theme of the monks, their predecessors: that the secular woman is dangerous indeed, but spiritual friendship is even more perilous than worldly familiarity. David of Augsburg describes in four separate places, with great plainness and detail, from his own wide experience, the gradual development of such familiarities from apparent good to open evil. He asserts that "the reverence for Religion (*i.e.* for the Franciscan Order) is made vile through such familiarities, and very many evils come to pass." But (as he complains) it is very difficult to avoid evil companionship: there are so many "by whom men are drawn into sin, not only by their example, but even by their persuasion and derision, and 'the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul.' And this evil conformity is now almost the principal cause why evils are so multiplied in the Church, and spiritual studies have failed in Religion, and many have become backsliders to external studies and business. . . ." There are so many too of whom it may be said, after years of religious routine,

"he is drawn away little by little from his first fervour, and his desire of spiritual progress grows languid, and there glide into his heart affections for religious women (or *vice versâ*, of men), and frequentings of such women: and at last, when all else is extinct, nothing is left but this poor solace, that he can still speak of the spirit; whereby either he sets himself above many who have not felt such spiritual experiences, or he gets for himself a name among religious women, who fancy that he speaks from the abundance of his heart, and is a good instructor in spiritual life and inward devotion. Very many are tossed by this storm of temptation, and few come safely to land."

"Often love, which seemed at first good and spiritual . . . changes to carnal love": "very many have perished by the sin of lechery." St. Bonaventura constantly harps on the same theme. There is no real safety but in flight. As Bernard of Besse remarks, after his warning against touching the hands of, or kissing, even a baby sister:

"I can call that man neither chaste nor honourable who abhors not to touch a woman or to suffer her touch. How should it be lawful to *touch* that which it is not lawful even to *behold.*"

No doubt this is to some extent a piece of religious rhetoric; yet it is impossible to study carefully the records, even of the earliest times, without realising how fatally the Order was shut out from healthy influence over one half of the world. Even if the Franciscan ideal had been otherwise practicable, it must, sooner or later, have been wrecked on this rock. The Friar's reputation was as delicate as that of Caesar's wife; and the satire of outsiders like Chaucer or Langland is abundantly explained by the painful solicitude of all earnest brethren within the Order.

Meanwhile, however, the vast and unwieldy phalanx was attempting to follow in the footsteps of the most spontaneous and unconventional genius of many ages; and with the natural result. St. Francis had let the world go by, because he had already in his soul a richer inheritance, the kingdom of God. But, apart from the first band of his personal followers, most friars began at the other end, like most men of any age whose religious feelings have received a sudden and violent stimulus from without. The world seemed to them a positive evil, a Thing to be fought against in much pain of soul and body. In the naïve records of the Mendicant chronicles, we get constant glimpses of a terrible gloom of life. The world was to them, as truly as to Bunyan, a Valley of the Shadow of Death, set off only by the painted mockeries and ghastly gaiety of Vanity Fair. St. Bonaventura names, under breaches of the Seventh Commandment, beside "curious gazing on women," "the curious listening to news, or to musical instruments . . . the sight of fair things, and the contemplation of delectable things with inordinateness of affection." Again, "the desire to see fair things and possess rare things" is, in a nun, "concupiscence of curiosity." The rules drawn up for Franciscan and Dominican Tertiaries—*i.e.* folk who, without entering the cloister, pledged themselves to lead a religious life in the world under the friars' guidance—forbid attendance at weddings or dances, among other "unhonest" and "worldly" spectacles. It is true, dancing is invariably spoken of as an immoral and dangerous pastime by medieval theologians, and with only too much justification from the manners of the time. The objection to weddings, too, may be partly explained by the not infrequent statutes against the practice of throwing snow, sawdust, and street sweepings on these occasions. But the fact remains, that the strict 13th century friar looked with as little favour as Calvin himself upon the ordinary amusements of his time. The Blessed Salomea, sister-in-law to St.

Elizabeth, showed her sanctity by keeping away altogether from the festivities of her court.

Moreover, outside the narrow circle of writings immediately inspired by the Founder, there is but little love of nature in early Franciscan literature. Even the not very frequent tales of love for animals are counterbalanced by others of an opposite sort, as of Brother Juniper cutting off the live pig's foot for a sick friend; of the hawk which God sent to rend sparrows who "presumed" to come into the refectory at Saragossa; of the flies which Benedict XIII. cursed away from the convent of Morella; and the swallows which Brother Adam drove away from his sermon. The medieval habit of looking for the Devil everywhere in Nature precluded anything like the widespread modern consideration for animals. St. Dominic is related, in the Appendix to *Lives of the Brethren,* to have deliberately plucked alive a wretched sparrow which disturbed his preaching, and which he therefore imagined to be the Devil, "amid much laughter from the Brothers and Sisters, and awful shrieks of the sparrow." The Marquis de Rambures, in his *L'Eglise et la Pitié envers les Animaux,* has produced very few examples in favour of his thesis, against the many that could be quoted of medieval indifference to dumb beasts; and the very tone of his quotation from St. Thomas Aquinas shows what a gulf there was between the general 13th century feeling and the modern, on this subject. It is not surprising, therefore, that the general attitude of the friar towards nature is rather that of the monk, by whom the beauty and variety of the visible world were deemed spiritual hindrances. Life was not worth living, but that God had imposed it on us as the one road to eternal salvation. As St. Bonaventura says: "Why do we desire life to last so long, wherein the longer we live the more we sin: the longer our span, the more numerous our faults! For evil grows daily, and good diminishes." David of Augsburg blames worldly folk for

"mourning when their children die, though it is safer they should die after baptism and before they can lose eternal life by mortal sin, than afterwards at a ripe age; for we know not of what sort they will grow up, and manifold are the snares of sin, from which very few escape."

Berthold of Ratisbon, again, complains how life is a prison, but good men

"stand ever at the door of their dungeon. As the imprisoned dog ever stands at the door, whining, scratching, travailing to come forth, so stands the righteous ever at the gate of death."

Another fault generally looked upon as specially characteristic of modern Puritanism—the complacent assurance that one's own clique is in the way of salvation, and that all others are on the

broad way to damnation—is not only thoroughly medieval, but specially characteristic of those who had taken religious vows. Pious men in the Middle Ages contemplated with the most Calvinistic complacency the hopeless damnation of the whole non-Christian world, including millions of unbaptised infants for whom Christian parents had shed bitter human tears. Jonathan Edwards's sermon on the doom of unbaptised infants, which is often quoted as a typical specimen of Puritanism, is simply a survival of the Middle Ages. St. Bonaventura only voices a medieval tenet, common at least from St. Gregory onwards, when he says that

" the sight of the pains of the damned heaps up the measure of the accidental joys of the righteous."

In the contemporary *Diaeta Salutis,* perhaps falsely attributed to him, the author quotes the Psalms to the same effect, describing with merciless glee how the saints at the Last Day, " shall rejoice in the damnation [of the unrighteous] as it is written ' the just shall rejoice when he seeth the revenge: he shall wash his hands in the blood of the sinner.' " His great Dominican contemporaries, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Chantimpré, and Humbert de Romans, write to the same effect. Later on, the saintly Gerson, who has often been credited with the *Imitation of Christ,* speaks with even more ghastly assurance, if possible, on this point. The difficulty is to understand, not how men of these convictions showed such readiness to hew Agag in pieces before the Lord for a question of belief; but rather how they managed so often to rise superior to their creed, and to suffer that men of different opinions should breathe the same air with themselves.

Space fails me for more than a bare enumeration of other equally important points. That " personal assurance of salvation " which to Newman seemed a special characteristic of " the extreme of Calvinism or Methodism," is ubiquitous in Franciscan legends. Again, Bunyan himself never wrestled more bitterly with the problems of predestination than many medieval Religious, to whom Satan would also come as an angel of light, and persuade suicide or homicide as the last stage of religious perfection. No village tabernacle was ever plainer than the first Franciscan churches: St. Bernard insists on the most Quakerish simplicity for his Cistercians, and Gerson feared that the images overdid their purpose of stimulating even the grosser minds of the laity. Many Franciscans believed that the Saint had forbidden church music altogether. The worst Vandalisms of the 17th century may be more than matched from the 13th and 14th; and a long chapter might be written on this one point. Churches were ravaged and ruined wholesale in war; even in peace, corn was

found stacked in the Cathedral of Parma, and a Devonshire parson used his nave not only as a barn, but as a brewhouse. Abundant evidence of this kind may be found in Father Denifle's *La Désolation des Eglises*, &c., and the visitations of Dean and Chapter churches for St. Paul's, Salisbury, and Exeter. In Italy, tombs were foully desecrated for mere political reasons; and jealous monks not only defaced paintings of St. Francis, but tore down the friars' crucifixes, and cast one at least into a cesspool.

In short, the unlovely features of Puritanism are simply such as have attended most great religious revivals. It would be difficult to name any doctrine or practice distinctively Puritan—as distinguished from those common to all Protestants—for which ample authority may not be found among orthodox medieval churchmen. Much of the odium rightly incurred by the zealots of the 17th century is simply due to the fact that they were the first party strong enough to enforce, on an enormous scale, that exaggerated and often repulsive other-worldliness, which had for centuries been the ideal of the hermitage and the cloister.

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THE HIGH ANCESTRY OF PURITANISM.

BY

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THE HIGH ANCESTRY OF PURITANISM.

THE more generally the history of mediæval religion is studied, no longer by one party exclusively, but by men of widely different views and sympathies, the more evident it becomes that the lessons of Church history contain correctives for the one-sided tendencies of all religious denominations. Nothing, for instance, has more hopelessly undermined extreme ritualism than the historical researches of the most learned ritualists, who have discovered that the 13th century altar was bare indeed compared with many which seem quite moderate nowadays, and that (to quote from one of them) "Some "pious usages [of later ritual] flow from very muddy sources." We are here on the outskirts of a truth which only wider study will finally establish, but which is dawning more clearly every day, that the pre-Reformation Church resembled modern English religion, with all its cross-currents and tangle of authority and conflict of sects, far more nearly than either Romanists or "advanced" Anglicans care to realise. A man dissatisfied with the modern world, if suddenly set back into his imaginary paradise of the 13th century, would find himself still confronted by a great deal which he specially abhors in modern nonconformity; and it would, perhaps, grate on him all the more for being then labelled with the label of the Church. Even Baptists and Ritualists are on better terms with each other nowadays than were the parish clergy and the friars of the Middle Ages: and the modern priest who loses no opportunity of expressing his dislike for Puritanism little suspects how much Puritanism there was in the highest places during the crowning period of the pre-Reformation Church. St. Bernard, St. Bonaventura, St. Thomas Aquinas go farther sometimes in this direction than a moderate Anglican of to-day would care to follow them: and, in spite of St. Francis's own joy in religion, there is a very strong note of Puritanism among the early friars. Even M. Sabatier, with his admirable historical sense, generalises too hastily in this respect from St. Francis and the *Fioretti* to the friars in general.

Records older than the *Fioretti*, and of a more strictly historical character, reveal among the early Franciscans and Dominicans a gloom of life, an exaggerated and stereotyped other-worldliness, an indifference or aversion to some of the noblest things in creation, which we are accustomed to attribute too exclusively to post-Reformation religious movements. The evidence which I am about to quote here is, of course, only a small portion of all that might be brought forward. It is taken from some of the earliest and most authentic Franciscan documents—from the genuine writings of St. Bonaventura and those by his secretary, Bernard of Besse, and his contemporary, David of Augsburg, which have commonly been attributed to the Saint himself—from such early chronicles as Salimbene and "the XXIV. Generals," and the similar Dominican "Lives of the Brethren." All these documents, with many more like them, point to the same fact, that much which the modern Anglican brands as distinctively sectarian was thoroughly characteristic of the average friar in the earlier and purer days of the two Orders.

To Newman, for instance, the "personal assurance of Salvation" was a special characteristic of "the extreme of Calvinism or "Methodism." From a purely modern point of view this idea is natural enough: for it is mainly Calvinists and Methodists nowadays who lay stress on that "conversion" of which the other is a natural corollary. But a wider view of religious history sweeps away this narrow limitation: since to the friar also there came a definite moment of "conversion"; and the friars, too, as Newman would have recognised if their original records had come within his reading, rivalled any Calvinist in the personal assurance of salvation. The ancient "Provinciale," published by Conrad Eubel, which gives a list of the friaries and of their most noteworthy occupants, contains such notices as, "Bro. Andrew earned, while yet he lived, the assurance "of the Crown of Life"; or, "Bro. Rolandino, of Florence, being in "prayer, was certified of a Crown laid up for him in heaven"; and more detailed accounts of similar assurances are frequent in the early chronicles. Moreover, every separate Franciscan might boast something of the same certitude; for the world was never allowed to forget the divine promise to their founder that all who kept his rule should come to eternal life. If Newman, therefore, could have escaped from his modern world of Calvinism and Methodism back to the Middle Ages, he would have found himself in far closer and more inevitable contact with these self-elected Predestinates, diverting parishioners from his services and offerings from his church; often preaching doctrines which to him seemed rank heresy; no longer to be loftily thrust aside as schismatics, but impregnably entrenched behind the special favour of Pope and people.

Nor was this—which I have taken first because of the importance lent to it by such an authority as Newman's—by any means the closest

point of contact between modern schism and mediæval orthodoxy. Nothing but a close study of the manuals of conduct written for friars by St. Bonaventura and his school can make us realise how little the ordinary conscientious Franciscan retained of St. Francis's joy in life, or in how many respects he was enslaved to a formalism worthy of the post-Reformation Puritan. The discipline of the convent (as I have pointed out elsewhere)* was the discipline of the quarterdeck: the rules of conduct were precise and narrow. Laughter and play are absolutely forbidden in these books: beautiful sights and sounds are condemned as savouring of "concupiscence"; the formal religious talk and the "D.V." of the Puritan are inculcated; prayer is to be accompanied by sighs and tears; dances and public festivities are improper, not only for the professional "Religious," but for all who wish to save their souls. No right-minded friar will gaze upon a woman if he can avoid it; the very existence of the other sex is a temptation permitted by God in His inscrutable Providence; upon this theme our friars wax as eloquent as the Wife of Bath's husband. That which to modern ideas is most repulsive in Calvinism—the iron logic with which it condemns so huge a proportion of mankind to eternal pain—is simply inherited from mediæval orthodoxy. Even Dante dared not save the unbaptised children of Christian parents from hell; while Saints Gregory, Bonaventura, and Thomas Aquinas reckon the sight of the wicked in hell-fire to be one of the joys of the blessed in heaven. To the mediæval friars, as to the later Puritans, hell was too often a far more vivid reality than heaven; nor did the elaborate theory of confession and absolution save men from the same blind gropings, the same rash confidence on the one hand or unreasonable despair on the other, which are sometimes spoken of as peculiar to later revivals. David of Augsburg writes of his own time as one might write of the eighteenth century. "Some trust only to God's "goodness, dreaming that He will save them even in their sins. . . . . "And others again have nought but mistrust of God, dreaming that "if they are converted, He will not give them perseverance in the "spirit or sustentation for their body." It is very remarkable how many mediæval saints—and friars at least in proportion to the rest—are recorded to have fought against despair, or against visible devils, on their very deathbed; St. Catherine of Siena is a typical instance. The devil was everywhere—legions of devils, often in bodily form. The Blessed John of La Vernia fought them with his staff as a man drives away flies; it was revealed to another of the brethren that "more than "8,000 demons" had been specially deputed to lay siege to a convent manned by only seven friars! The *Fioretti* shows us how difficult St. Francis himself found it to expose the wiles of the devil who, in our Lord's shape, had assured the saintly Ruffino that he was destined to damnation. Giles, more saintly if possible than Ruffino, spent long

* "Side-Lights on the Franciscans." *Independent Review*, Feb., 1905.

hours of such agony with devils in solitude that "at night, when he "went back to his cell, he would say with a sigh, 'Now, I look for my "'martyrdom.'" Saints of the Middle Ages often tortured themselves as much with mysteries of Predestination as any Calvinist of them all. And it was worse still when Satan came in the shape of our Lord or of the Virgin Mary, with all the glory of heaven around him, and unutterable temptations on his lips. It was thus (we are often told) that he was specially wont to appear to "men of singular perfec-"tion and of good progress in religion." In this guise he would persuade the friar, crazed with his own doubts and fears and ecstasies, that the last stage of religious perfection was to be found in suicide or homicide. Such stories are frequent everywhere, and two chroniclers tell us of a friar who crucified himself to consummate his imitation of Christ. In fact, the more careless was the merriment of the great world, the worse were the struggles of those conscientious religious who retired from it. Behind the bright pageants of the Middle Ages there is a constant undertone of spiritual wailing and gnashing of teeth. Even the tournament, dearest of all to modern romance, was anathema to the religious mind of the thirteenth century.

But a modern partisan of the Middle Ages might plead, "All this "is merely a natural cloud cast upon earnest minds by the rough "conditions of life in those days; this is only one side of Puritanism. "You cannot attribute to the Catholic Revivals of the thirteenth "century what to my taste is the most hateful feature of the later "Puritan. The friars enjoyed all the rich ritual of the Roman Church, "and they have left us some of the most splendid churches in Italy. "Even if they were Puritan in heart, at least they were Catholic in "eye and ear." No, not even so were they Catholic (in the lower sense in which the word is used nowadays even of a pattern in church-tiles), except so far as they were false to their first ideal. The thirteenth century parish church, to begin with, was bare of ornament in comparison with even a moderately "high" Anglican church of the present day. And, beyond this, it is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which religious revivals of the Middle Ages revived also simplicity of worship. The early Cistercian ideal is extraordinarily bare. Mabillon rejects a religious poem often ascribed to St. Bernard "because the Cistercians admitted nothing which was bound by the "laws of metre." St. Bernard, in his Epistle to Abbot William, writes of sumptuous churches and their ornaments in words which George Fox might have echoed. The pictures of saints on the walls (as he says) "attracting the worshippers' gaze, hinder their devotions, and "almost remind me of the Jewish ritual." In parish churches, this may pass: for the bishops, "unable to excite the devotion of the carnal "multitude with spiritual things, do so with material ornaments." But we monks "who have reputed as filth all that shines bright or sounds "sweet to the ear, what fruit do we expect from these things? The

"admiration of fools, or the offerings of the simple? or, since we are "mingled among the heathen, perchance we have learned their works "and even yet serve their idols?" Nor is such Puritanism confined to monastic churches; though St. Bernard, as we have seen, would permit pictures and ornaments to the laity who live on a lower religious plane. The saintly Gerson shows plainly that he believed true religion to be imperilled in many ways by the gorgeousness even of the parish churches of his day. "Is it expedient," he asks, "to have so great a "variety of images and pictures in our churches, or do they not some- "times pervert many simple folk to idolatry?" His older contemporary Eustache Deschamps speaks still more plainly to the same effect.

This feeling that the highest religion is least dependent on beautiful sights or sounds was strong among the early friars. They were Puritanical in the plainness of their services. St. Francis expressly forbade the saying of more than one Mass daily in each of their little churches—a prohibition which was neglected almost before his corpse was cold; for more Masses meant more money, as the parish clergy had long ago discovered. The enormous majority of the first settlements had no church at all, no singing, and not always even a separate oratory for the daily offices of the brethren. When the early friars were near a town or a village, they heard Mass singly like other folk, at the parish church. But many of them worshipped in a solitude of contemplation which seldom needed any outward forms whatever. The blessed Conrad of Offida was one of the chiefs of the Spirituals, and is conspicuous in the *Fioretti*. Yet he confessed that, since he had been made priest and sung Mass for himself, he had lost sadly in spiritual consolation. It was no doubt for the same reason that Brother Thomas the Irishman, one of the special glories of the friary at Aquila, "cut off his thumb lest he should be compelled to take "priests' orders." The stricter of the friars had even a definite dislike for Church music; as we have seen that St. Bernard thought it wrong for a monk to find actual enjoyment in sweet sounds. "If God," writes David of Augsburg, "took delight in the melody of a voice, "then should the mere music of instruments or the song of birds "charm Him: for these are sweet enough in their own fashion. Purity "of heart, and a mind devoted to Him—these are that wherein He "delighteth. The servant of God should not care greatly for whatso- "ever is indifferent to Him." Roger Bacon expresses his disgust at the "curiousness of new harmonies . . . . and foolish pleasure in "manifold songs," which has invaded the Church music of his day. So widespread was this dislike of elaborate music, or of music at all, that Wadding, in the seventeenth century, feels obliged to argue against certain of the order who believed St. Francis and his first companions to have forbidden singing and organs in church, and who therefore "utterly forbid" the same in his own day.

The early taste in buildings was equally plain, not to say sordid.

A Carthusian of the twelfth century, rebuking his brethren for having borrowed money to build a fine convent instead of the old mud huts, writes, "These beauties and outward elegances quickly enervate "the manly purpose and effeminate the masculine mind. . . . It better "befits a mind intent on its *inward* health, that all *without* should be "rude and neglected." St. Francis, too, loved mud huts, and even wanted to have the new stone buildings at Bologna and Assisi pulled down. The few friars' churches built at this time, as we know from Angelo Clareno, were extremely small and plain. "Our small churches "will preach," said St. Francis, "and men will be more edified by these "things than by words." The church at Cambridge, as described by Eccleston, would have been almost too miserable for a village meeting-house in our day. The building of fine churches coincides exactly, not only in time but in logic, with the persecution of those brethren who clung strictly to the primitive Franciscan rule. The splendid Basilica at Assisi, with its frescoes by Giotto, was almost as definitely contrary to the teaching and example of St. Francis as was the Golden Calf to that of Moses. Thomas of Celano relates how an otherwise excellent friar was damned everlastingly for his share in the construction of these glorious buildings; Eccleston is not certain whether any were absolutely damned, but he knows by revelation that many expiated it bitterly in purgatory. Some of the dearest friends of St. Francis were imprisoned for their vehement protest against these and other violations of the rule: one of them, Cæsarius of Speyer, was killed by his gaoler. Such buildings as Sta. Croce at Florence were a terrible scandal to the Spirituals, and St. Bonaventura finds in them one of the main symptoms of spiritual decay. A vain attempt was made to check these "excesses" at the General Chapter of Narbonne (1260), where it was decreed that the churches must be as small, as plain, and as cheaply furnished as possible. Not only were bell-towers forbidden, but even stained glass, except that the east window might have figures of our Lord, the Virgin, St. Francis, and St. Antony of Padua. Yet even this was a falling away from the first ideal: for Eccleston tells us how the visitor of the English provinces (about 1230) "took very stringent measures concerning the [painted] "windows in the chapel of the Gloucester convent; and deprived a "friar of his habit by reason of a pulpit which he had painted; the "same punishment was inflicted on the guardian of the convent for "having suffered such paintings."

Even the iconoclasm of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries finds its worthy counterpart in the thirteenth and fourteenth. Salimbene describes how mediæval boys, like their modern successors, threw stones at priceless sculptures and frescoes; and how a whole town, in a fit of passion, would subject its artistic glories to the basest mutilations and defilements. Not only theologians, but men of genius like Ruskin and William Morris have helped to spread false ideas on this

point. No more systematic destruction of ancient buildings was ever carried out than in mediæval Rome; and all careful students of Gothic architecture know that the builder of the Middle Ages was pitiless to any older work which stood in his way. The pious and learned Johann Busch describes with unholy glee, among his other "reforms" in a conventional church, the "conveyance" of an effigy which had long graced the tomb of a mere ordinarily holy bishop, in order that it might be placed over the bones of a sainted predecessor who had lain 300 years under a plain stone. Nor were even the church buildings and furniture as much respected in the thirteenth century as in our own. The "Mirror of Perfection" tells us how sordid they often were in St. Francis's day, and what pains he took to sweep them. Here, again, is Brother Salimbene's description of the Italian churches even after 70 or 80 years of Franciscan influence. "I have found "priests who . . . . when the people communicate, thrust the conse- "crated hosts which are left over into clefts of the wall: though these "are the very Body of our Lord. And many other foul things they "do and horrible to be told, which I pass over for brevity's sake. "They keep their missals, corporals, and church ornaments in an "indecent state—coarse, black and stained; tiny chalices of tarnished "pewter, rough country wine or vinegar for the Mass. The hosts they "consecrate are so little as scarce to be seen betwixt their fingers; "not circular, but square, and all filthy with the excrements of flies. "Many women have better shoe-bands than the cincture, stole and "maniple of many priests, as I have seen with mine own eyes. One "day when a Franciscan friar had to celebrate mass in a certain priest's "church on a feast day, he had no stole but the girdle of the priest's "concubine, with the bunch of keys attached; and when the friar "(whom I knew personally) turned round to say *Dominus vobiscum*, "the people heard the jingling of the keys" (p. 215). This is no exaggeration, for we have the surest documentary evidence to the same effect. Eudes Rigaud, the great Archbishop of Rouen under St. Louis, orders church windows to be walled up for economy's sake, in as matter-of-fact a way as if he had been a churchwarden of the 18th century. Surviving surveys of churches, appropriated to the deans and chapters of Exeter, Salisbury and St. Paul's respectively, show that our English sanctuaries in the 13th and 14th centuries were often scandalously neglected. The worst part of these dioceses was naturally Cornwall, where the visitation of 1331 shows the following results from the sixteen churches or chapels. At one only "all is in a "good state, as it seems, for the present." In three the chancel is more or less ruinous; in eleven the church books and furniture are in a scandalously bad state; in three others "there are practically none of "the necessaries for divine service." It is only fair to add that one of these cases was due to a recent sacrilegious robbery. At St. Mary-church, in 1301, the parson was found stacking his corn and brewing

his beer in the nave of his church, and we find the same corn-stacks in the cathedral of Parma about 1240 A.D. Again, the wholesale vandalism which came in the train of mediæval wars can scarcely be realised now. Not only were churches constantly pillaged and destroyed by either party, but they were regularly used as fortresses, in spite of repeated prohibitions. Here they were exposed not only to the ordinary fate of a besieged or captured stronghold, but also to the most reckless treatment from a dissolute garrison, including nameless desecrations which their worst enemies would not impute to the Puritans of the 17th century. Details which cannot be quoted here may be found in Sacchetti's Sermons, No. VII. The Hundred Years' War was a disciplined and orderly affair compared with those of Italy and the South of France during the 13th century; yet those who would realise how much beautiful architecture perished long before the Reformation should read the terrible array of 14th and 15th century documents published by Dr. Denifle, sub-librarian to the Vatican, under the title of "*La Désolation des Eglises*, etc." Nor was that spirit wanting which thinks to do God service by destroying objects of art which the veneration of one party has rendered odious to their religious adversaries. There was at first a good deal of disbelief in the stigmata of St. Francis. Religious rivals who envied the popularity accruing to the Order from this miracle, unique then, though it has become common enough since, were wont to disfigure the paintings in which the saint's stigmata were shown. Again, certain Cluniac monks of the diocese of Agen, enraged with the friars for settling there, broke through the roof and doors of the church during service time, and pillaged the furniture and books; Wadding records several cases of the same kind. Next to the Holy Wafer, no material object was so profundly revered in the Middle Ages as the Crucifix. Yet the Cluniacs who tried to drive the friars from Charlieu did not hesitate to break their crosses, and the Bishop of Piacenza, for a like reason, caused a Franciscan wayside crucifix to be torn up by his clergy and thrown into a cesspool. The lamentable iconoclasm of our reformers was simply a survival from earlier and still more barbarous times; an old leaven of malice working under specially favourable conditions.

St. Francis was too beautiful a character to be tainted by the worst faults of his age, and a few of his best disciples kept the true spirit of their master. But the vast majority soon became either men of the world or Puritan ascetics of almost the old pre-Franciscan type. It is painful to note how soon they slid into much of that "holy selfishness" (*sancta rusticitas*) which they themselves so condemned in the older Orders. The blessed Angela of Foligno is singled out for our special admiration in Canon Knox-Little's "St. Francis." She was the spiritual instructress of Ubertino da Casale, whom Dante names as the typical spiritual of his day. She was suddenly converted by the

preaching of a friar, and "within a few days she profited so "rapidly in the school of Christ that she loved nought but Him, "and all became vile dross to her in comparison of Him alone. She "mourned to be held by obedience to her husband, by reverence for "her mother, and by the care of her children, for she would fain have "devoted herself wholly to Christ, on Whose love she desired to spend "all her care. She besought the Lord with frequent prayers that He "could deign to remove all hindrances, both within and without, that "her soul might be wholly set on cultivating virtue and on "contemplating the mysteries of Heaven; and so it befel that, within "a brief space, her mother first, then her husband, and presently all "her children passed away from this world." The real significance of a story like this lies less in the facts themselves than in the naïve admiration with which they were passed from mouth to mouth among the Franciscans, the official solemnity with which they were recorded for posterity, and the gravity with which they are reproduced, even in the middle of the 17th century, by so sober a scholar as Wadding. The pages of Franciscan and Dominican chronicles simply teem with indications that both Orders were still deeply tinged with the old selfish idea of life as a sort of jostle for salvation, a religious *sauve qui peut.* "Be not much disquieted about studying for others' profit," says Brother Giles in the *Fioretti* (pt. V. c. 12), "but ever study and "be anxious about thyself, and do those things which are profitable to "thyself . . . . for it is not credible that thou shouldest love others' "souls more than thine own" (cf. ibid, pt. I., c. 42, 45; and v. 5, and contrast with Romans ix. 3). The extreme Spirituals, as Angelo Clareno shows us again and again, were scandalised and not edified by the extent to which their brother friars mixed among their fellow men. Even Berthold of Ratisbon, perhaps the greatest popular preacher of the Middle Ages, is not wholly free from this *sancta rusticitas*; nor even Berthold's master, David of Augsburg, who deplores the loss of spiritual fervour which comes from frequent intercourse with the laity; and who writes in another place: "Beware lest "thou regard or scrutinise curiously other men's persons, faces, "dispositions, dress, gestures, deeds, words or duties. So far as it "pertaineth not to thee to scrutinise these things for the sake of "[spiritual] profit, pass them by and think no more thereon than if they "were sheep or other beasts; let them claim no more either of thine "eyes or of thine heart." Who could imagine, from a study of the *Fioretti* and kindred records, that such words had been written by one of St. Francis's sincerest followers, and passed down semi-officially to posterity among the works ascribed to St. Bonaventura!

Perhaps the foregoing considerations may give serious thought to those who are apt to look upon Puritanism as an invention of the 16th century, and to discredit modern religious revivals by comparison with the romantic friar of the *Fioretti.* That charming idyll no more

represents the real bitterness of the war against the world in the 13th century than Lucy Hutchinson's memoirs show us the bitterness of the 17th century Leveller. A closer study of the real 13th century would not be comforting to the well-meaning men who are dissatisfied with their own generation mainly because it is their own. Puritanism, indeed, is not of one time, but of most times, and especially of most religious revivals. Its faults are simply the faults of exaggeration, an exaggerated belief in the value of religious phrases and religious deportment, with an exaggerated depreciation of "the "world," in that narrow sense which was of hoary antiquity before the 16th century was born. Revivals are nothing if not in earnest; yet the word *earnest* itself has gradually acquired an invidious meaning, so impossible is it to avoid exaggeration, and to fight (where there is no doubt that one must fight somehow) with a pleasant smile on one's face. The Puritanism of the Reformation was simply the strictest and most logical attempt yet made to realise certain thoroughly mediæval ideals; its theory had long been the theory of the religious, but none had yet dared to enforce it wholesale. Charles I., as we know, lost his head simply by trying to realise the ideals which his father had held with equal conviction though with less courage. So the pursuit of an exaggerated and impossible otherworldliness, with all its natural fruits of frequent formality and hypocrisy, has damaged for ever the reputation of that religious revival which for the first time found itself strong enough to force time-honoured ideas for a brief moment upon an unwilling nation.

G. G. COULTON.

ROMANISM AND MORALS

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"NEVER was there so great a show of wisdom, nor such restless and world-wide activity in so many branches of study, as in the last forty years . . . yet never did such ignorance and error reign as now . . . For more sins sway the world in these days than in any previous age; and sin is incompatible with true learning . . . Therefore, since men's lives contradict the laws of Wisdom, they canno possibly understand Her, even though they roll pompou phrases in their mouths, like boys gabbling their Psalms by rote, or like clerks and country priests repeating the Church services—of which they understand little or nothing—after the fashion of brute beasts."

The first sentences, a reader might say, are from Dr. Barry's indictment of this agnostic century in a recent number of *The National Review*; the last words are the words of Mr. Kensit. Yet in fact the whole quotation is from one of the greatest philosophers of the Ages of Faith, and one of the greatest Englishmen of all times: Roger Bacon. It may be found (with much more to the same purpose) in the beginning of his *Compendium of the Study of Philosophy*, dedicated about 1271 to the reigning Pope. The "forty years" refer, as he expressly tells us, to the Franciscan and Dominican reform; yet, after a generation of that reform, the boasted learning of the thirteenth century was, in Bacon's judgment, rotten to the core. Moreover, he traces its rottenness directly to the wickedness of the age, and asserts that his fellow students were as definitely inferior to the pagan philosophers in morals as they were in true learning, in spite of the help which professing Christians ought to have found in God's grace, through baptism and Holy Communion. Nor does

he stop short at generalities, but enters into details about professors of Divinity and students at Paris which show a state of things far worse than anything alleged in Dr. Barry's indictment, though it can be proved to the hilt from other sources. Not only does this contemporary of St. Thomas Aquinas condemn *en bloc* the learning of his own age, but he criticises St. Thomas himself in words which might have been echoed, rightly or wrongly, by Dr. Barry's *bête noire*, Huxley. The Thomist system, he says, is a magnificent building to the eye ; but it rests upon a Bible misunderstood, an Aristotle misunderstood, and omits altogether two of the corner-stones of true philosophy—the mathematical and the physical sciences.

How, in the face of these facts, can Dr. Barry write as he does ? The question is best answered by another. How, in the face of the notorious immorality of pagan times, could Bacon put ancient morals far higher than those of the Golden Age of Catholicism ? The cause in both cases lies in ignorance of past history. In Bacon's days, the real knowledge of antiquity was impossible ; and Bacon could no more have constructed a true picture of the age of Socrates than he could have turned out a modern locomotive. In our age, sufficient materials for reconstructing thirteenth century life are indeed to hand ; but Dr. Barry has not fully used them. He has chosen to write as an impassioned advocate rather than as a sober student, even though he claims, " with past history open before me," to date his article from " the Palace of Truth." And his logic is as false as his history. If, as he argues, the moral decay with which he charges our age is due to a waning belief in dogma, then the whole history of European morals since the thirteenth century should show a steady downward progression. Dr. Barry knows very well that this is not so ; for he has written otherwise in his *Papal Monarchy*. After a survey of thirteenth century corruptions, which, however imperfect, still shows that he realises the civilisation of that age to have been lower than our own, he adds : " We can neither conceive nor imagine such a time ; therefore we shall do well to refrain from judging it." He does not, however, refrain from judging very mercilessly the age in

which God has cast our own lot; and I claim the right of speaking here as plainly about the "Age of Faith," as Dr. Barry has spoken about the "Age of Agnosticism." For if, during the 600 years in which the civilised world has adopted an increasingly critical attitude, first towards the Romanist creed, and finally towards all creeds that would confine human enquiry within too narrow dogmatic limits —if, during those 600 years, morality has not actually gone far backwards, then it is evident at once that something halts in Dr. Barry's theory. If, on the other hand, with all our faults, we stand as high above thirteenth century morality as that age, with all its faults, stood above the ages of Socrates or Marcus Antoninus, then we shall only wonder how a professed student of history can claim historical authority for so strangely unhistorical a theory. As a special student for many years of thirteenth century life, I know how far even the most plain-spoken historians are from telling the naked truth, which I will try to lay very briefly here before the reader. If Dr. Barry believes me to be exaggerating, and will stake his authority on that belief, I will gladly print and publish at my own expense anything which he chooses to write in answer to this article, only allowing myself as many pages of rejoinder as he takes for his reply.

Roger Bacon, though living in the main current of the new reforms, looks upon his own age as utterly degenerate. He hopes—with a hope that is nine-tenths despair—for some *Deus ex machinâ*, for a Good Pope or a Good Emperor, to reverse the worldly policy of his predecessors. Failing that, he sees nothing possible but Christ's sudden coming to judge a world already brimful of iniquity. He lays special stress on the prevalence of the sins of the flesh. Like all other moralists of his time, he names the clergy as the fountain-head of evil. "Everywhere we shall find boundless corruption; and first of all in the Head. . . . Let us consider the Religious Orders; I exclude none from what I say. See how far they are fallen, one and all, from their right state; and the new Orders [of Friars] are already horribly decayed from their first dignity. The whole clergy is intent upon pride, lechery, and avarice." The same testi-

mony is borne by some of his most distinguished contemporaries. The great Franciscan teacher Adam Marsh is never weary of alluding to "these most damnable times," "these days of uttermost perdition," in which all but the spiritually blind "see plainly that Satan is either already loosed or soon to be loosed." Grosseteste, perhaps the greatest of our medieval bishops, complained before the Pope at Lyons that even the small fraction of professedly orthodox Christians was "almost wholly separated from Christ, and incorporate with the Devil through the seven deadly sins." St. Francis, at the very end of his life, spoke of "these times of superabundant malice and iniquity;" and his earliest biographer, Thomas of Celano, complained that the overwhelming majority of thirteenth century Italians "had nothing but the mere name of Christians to boast themselves with." The same despairing cry is echoed by St. Bonaventura, Vincent of Beauvais, Humbert de Romans, Gerard de Frachet, Thomas de Chantimpré, Raimondo da Vigna—to name none but distinguished friars who knew intimately the first few generations of Franciscan and Dominican influence. "The Church," wrote Gerson prophetically on the eve of the Reformation, "is more morally degraded than was the Synagogue at the moment when it was about to be swept away;" "it is consumed by an incurable cancer, and the very remedies do but make it more sick."

"But," it may be said, "these may be only the rhetorical exaggerations of well-meaning men who were carried away by the vehemence of their indignation at certain abuses going on under their own eyes. How utterly false would be an idea of our age gathered by some future historian simply from Dr. Barry's article and others of the same kind."

First, then, I would point out, that *all* my quotations are from standard books of European reputation in their time, which have been thought worthy of print whole centuries after their authors' death; while some have the authority of Roger Bacon, Bonaventura, and St. Francis—names that will be great as long as the world lasts. Secondly, the authors whom I quote had no quarrel, as Dr. Barry has,

with the *principles* of their time; they wrote as professing Roman Catholics to professing Roman Catholics, and therefore lacked the most powerful of all temptations to darken the picture. Thirdly, their judgments are abundantly borne out by contemporary evidence.

"First of all, we shall find corruption in the Head." The Popes of the thirteenth century were, on the whole, the best the Church had had for 300 years, or was to have for 300 years to come. Dr. Barry was wise to end his popular history of the Papal Monarchy prematurely at the close of the thirteenth century; he would have found it difficult to continue it up to the Reformation. Yet the personal purity of at least three Popes of the thirteenth century was seriously doubted by their contemporaries; and Popes lie in Dante's Hell like sheep. The Papal court was then, as always until recent times, a notorious den of corruption. As one of the few really good Cardinals complained, it had turned the city of Lyons into one huge brothel during its few years of residence there; and the same evil reputation was enjoyed by Avignon, Constance, and Rome, during other periods of Papal residence. The other prelates were just as bad. Gregory X. complained, in 1274, that "they were the ruin of Christendom;" and only by exerting the whole weight of his authority at a great General Council did he succeed at last in deposing Henry of Liége, whose episcopal career of nearly thirty years would be incredible, but for the number of parallel instances that might be quoted. Two abbesses and a nun were among his concubines; and he boasted of having had fourteen children in twenty-two months. Yet he was Bishop by the special grace of Pope Innocent IV. The inferior clergy followed suit. St. Bonaventura complains of their ignorance, their immorality, and the dangers of the confessional, in language which would be treated as bigoted in a modern Protestant's mouth. Salimbene relates that he has "a hundred times" heard Italian parish clergy quoting, *as a text from St. Paul's Epistles*, the maxim: "If not chastely, at least cautiously," to justify their immorality. English cathedrals were partly built out of the fines of incontinent priests. The contemporary Register of Eudes Rigaud of Rouen shows that

about 18 per cent. of the parish clergy in his diocese were known to him by name as black sheep ; yet only here and there could he get rid of the worst offenders. Similar Registers bear out the bitter complaints of clerical ignorance formulated by Bacon, Bonaventura, Aquinas, and many others. In 1222, the curates-in-charge of five out of seventeen Salisbury Dean-and-Chapter livings were found, on examination, quite unable to construe a single sentence of the Mass service which they had mumbled daily for years. Rigaud's Register gives us the results of similar examinations of priests in Normandy. Gerson, again, represents the Church as crying aloud to the Pope: "Whom wilt thou give, out of the whole body of the priesthood, who is not ignorant of Christ's law?" "Ignorance of God," writes Dr. Barry very truly, "lies at the root of social anarchy." That is why the Reformation was attended with so much lawlessness, and the French Revolution with still more. If the masses are not taught the real Duties of Man, they will inevitably misbehave when they tardily inherit the Rights of Man.

For the masses of the thirteenth century stood, as they stand in all ages, below the clergy. Thousands did not know even the Lord's Prayer; thousands were never confirmed, though throughout England the population did not average 500 souls to a parish—the population of an ordinary modern village. The very few who could read were generally discouraged from reading the Bible or similarly "high and sacred" books—Abbot Gasquet's specious arguments notwithstanding. The failure of the Crusades was followed by a general outburst of infidelity. Salimbene tells us how men would refuse charity to the friars, and give instead to some common tramp, crying: "Take this, in Mahomet's name, for he is mightier than Christ now-a-days." With all the priest's inquisitorial and disciplinary rights over his flock, he could not get his parishioners to attend at more than a fraction of the Sunday Mass, or to behave with ordinary decency in church during even those brief minutes. We have the most varied and curious evidence to this effect. Dr. Barry speaks of the confusion of modern sects. Is he unaware that the

thirteenth century bred many that were far more absurd and more indecent than those of the present age? Does he not know how often even the orthodox were tortured with deadly doubts, and how (by the confession of contemporaries), in proportion to their longing for God's presence they were haunted by visions of the Devil? Suicide, the one crime of violence which was rarer then than now, was yet far more common in monasteries and convents, where crazy fanatics were often persuaded that this, or homicide, represented the last phase of Religious Perfection.

For it must be understood that even the slight tendency of certain crimes to increase in recent years leaves us still out of all proportion better than our ancestors of 600 years ago. I will review briefly all the crimes of which Dr. Barry complains. By two independent calculations, from coroners' rolls of Oxford and Bedfordshire, I get at the same result—that the percentage of murders and homicides to the total population of those days was *more than twenty times* greater than at present. With rape, the disproportion is greater still; for it was a habitual practice in warfare, and when was Europe without war? Even nowadays it is in Romanist countries that gambling is especially rampant; in the Middle Ages it was far worse, and rendered even chess a disreputable game. St. Bernardino complains of the horrible blasphemies and mutilations of saints' images to which the gambling mania led—far worse than anything known to modern Protestantism. Drunkenness, even without the worst modern temptation of distilled liquors, was also rampant in the past; at Oxford, as Dr. Rashdall points out, it was not even an offence recognised by the University authorities. As to obscenity, I dare not even summarise the testimony of Thomas of Celano and Gerson, which points to something far beyond modern France and Italy. One of St. Catherine of Siena's worst trials lay in the impossibility of escaping from foul talk in respectable middle-class circles. There is scarcely a book of medieval history or fiction, even including the collections of anecdotes for preachers' use, which could conveniently be published in an unexpurgated translation. Dozens of songs and paro-

dies written by medieval clerics, and preserved to modern times in monastic or cathedral libraries, are far too licentious to be translated and published in any modern community. The beautiful poem from which Neale took *Jerusalem the Golden* is in many parts quite untranslateable. It is very strange that Dr. Barry, a professed medievalist, should not have at least some inkling of these things; and that he should not know how little the thirteenth century can be spoken of as a time of pure and ideal family life, untainted by divorce, though space fails me to grapple here with a subject which is complicated by medieval legal fictions.

But (argues Dr. Barry) crime has only "changed its character from violence to cunning, and robs where it used to commit murder." Even that would be something; for presumably Dr. Barry would readily hand over his purse in response to a serious request for his money or his life. But the change is *not* such as he describes; the standard of commercial morality has in fact risen as much as that of general morality. His own *Papal Monarchy* shows that he is aware how scandalously and constantly the medieval Popes embezzled for private purposes the vast sums yearly collected from the faithful of Europe for the Crusades. Jabez Balfour not only wore the Papal tiara in the thirteenth century, but also lived very comfortably everywhere, since the Press was non-existent, and the judge who refused a bribe was extolled as a miracle of perfection. Study the story of any religious house of which a full chronicle survives; the chances are that you will find wholesale embezzlement rampant from generation to generation. Preachers and moralists complained, with wearisome and ineffectual iteration, that "in these evil times" a tradesman must cheat or starve. What is more, the pious theft was as definitely encouraged by high medieval moralists as the pious fraud. Dr. Barry himself has written of the latter, with a touch of his usual tenderness for the past: "to manipulate ancient writings, to edit history in one's own favour, did not appear criminal if the end were otherwise just and good." Salimbene and Cardinal Jacques de Vitry both describe the concoction of successful bogus miracles

with no less gusto than real miracles; and St. Francis himself began his apostolic career with a pious theft.[1]

Throughout the course of history, no country in which Roman dogmas have been accepted can compare in general morality with the modern Protestant States; and I feel sure that Dr. Barry himself knows this too well to risk the comparison of original authorities to which I challenge him.

On one point, however, I am glad to agree with Dr. Barry. Neo-Malthusianism is comparatively modern *as a general practice.* It is gaining ground alarmingly in most civilised countries; and I heartily endorse his plea that it is contrary both to natural and to Christian morality. It is a difficult subject to discuss in these pages, though here again I am quite ready to join issue with Dr. Barry on neutral ground, and to show by contemporary evidence that no Romanist can afford to throw stones at modern society on this account. I will only point out here, that his indictment is one-sided, since it does not sufficiently allow for the temptations created by the diffusion of medical knowledge and mechanical inventions, just as he fails to allow for the temptations to drunkenness created by the cheapness of spirits. Six hundred years ago, when even educated men imagined the stomach to be a cauldron in which the food was cooked by the heat of the adjacent liver, Neo-Malthusianism was primitive in its methods, and practised most generally (as I will show Dr. Barry, if he cares to ask publicly for the evidence) in convents. Moreover, in an age when war and rapine, famine and plague, thinned off the population far more effectually than any modern practices—when the population of Europe was scarcely one-tenth of the present—a large family was an obvious source of strength; and restriction would have been sheer lunacy, from the most selfish point of view. The very virtues of modern times—our comparative peace, the cleanliness which

[1] So at least all the earliest accounts imply most definitely; and the first to deny it, so far as I know, is Wadding, more than four centuries after the event. Moreover, even Wadding argues that the theft, if theft there had been, would have been justified by the Saint's piety. Canon Knox-Little is characteristically inaccurate in sneering at this accusation of theft as modern; it is only the unqualified horror of it that is modern.

kills disease germs instead of allowing them to decimate us, our better medical knowledge—have thus created new temptations. All such fresh temptations are merely God's ways of proving and improving the human race. Those who cannot resist alcohol die out, first individually, and then in their descendants. So also with those who cannot resist Neo-Malthusianism. For Dr. Barry has entirely ignored the one reassuring side of the problem: that medicine is beginning to preach against the practice as emphatically as theology. The habits of which he complains began in, and have spread to us from, France and Italy. But in France and Italy, as I know from having seen them, cheap medical books have for years been sold broadcast, which preach plainly, not the altruistic "you are ruining the race," but the more direct "Neo-Malthusianism ruins your own health." We have therefore here only the same story as with alcohol—first, rapid diffusion and great abuse, then a gradual return to the normal state of things, as a later generation learns by experience, locates the enemy clearly, and is armed to fight against it. The human race will always leave the bones of its fallen along its track through the wilderness; but it will always march on, in spite of reactionary cries.

For Dr. Barry's article is hopelessly reactionary. He must know very well that, 600 years ago, his own modern Romanism would on many points have left him open to the Inquisitor's dismal condemnation: "Recant—or the stake!" Possibly, however, he does not know that, in that same age, some of St. Thomas Aquinas' characteristic propositions were as publicly and solemnly condemned as Darwin's and Huxley's in ours. In his sneer at the New Decalogue, Dr. Barry shows utter blindness to the entirely modern virtue of toleration, under shelter of which he is able to cry aloud among Protestants, to get full credit from both sides for his real good intentions, and to influence public opinion so far as his assertions will bear the light of criticism. He is equally blind to the true significance of the modern faith, not only broader but deeper than that of Aquinas, which looks upon Romanism as only one of the best among many creeds, to each of which the wise man

must render its due share of respect. He frankly confesses his own inability to conceive a religion gradually transcending dogma, just as the Chaldean who was accustomed to worship God only in His wonderful stars sneered at the Hebrew fools who believed in an invisible Jehovah ; or as the Jew, with his ancient Temple and its splendid ritual, sneered at the publicans and sinners who risked a new religious venture in memory of a crucified carpenter. He laments a dead and buried world, as the reactionaries of St. Augustine's time lamented a dying Paganism, and exalted purely transitory symptoms of history into proofs that Christianity was leading the world to its ruin. Meanwhile, the future belongs, not indeed to the dummy agnostic whom Dr. Barry sets up to knock down again, but to the steadily growing majority of thoughtful men who claim the Pauline right of proving all things, and holding fast that which is good. Such men cling to all that is best in the past, as St. Augustine clung to his Virgil and Plato ; but they look forward to a far more exceeding weight of glory in the future. For their faces are turned resolutely away from the old Egyptian bondage ; and, through all failures and punishments for failure, through fears without and fightings within, they have a steady vision of the City of God.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MONASTERIES.

BY

G. G. COULTON.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MONASTERIES.

IN this REVIEW for December, 1905, I brought very plain accusations of historical misrepresentation against a number of the best-known Roman Catholic controversialists in England, laying special stress on Abbot Gasquet's treatment of the monastic question. I offered to print replies from these gentlemen at my own expense: while the columns of the CONTEMPORARY stood open, of course, to any counter article: but they have all declined these opportunities. I have indeed received uncomplimentary halfpenny postcards from two of the gentlemen named; and a third person, writing from Gibraltar and omitting to pay the postage, has sent me an anonymous letter beginning "Who the d——l are you?" and continuing in the same strain. In addition to this, Mgr. Vaughan and Canon Courtenay have attacked me in the columns of the Romanist *Tablet*, but with gross misstatements which I had no difficulty in exposing: Father Gerard has again attacked me semi-officially in the same paper, showing again an ignorance of German, and a readiness to make any assertion which suited his momentary controversial purpose, beyond what I had before suspected in him. Indeed, it is not so much their original inaccuracy which marks off certain Romanist controversialists from most other men of equal education and social standing, as their attitude in the face of unwelcome evidence.* The Editor of the *Catholic Times* (though I am glad to say I did him wrong in accusing him of a third suppression) is still impenitent in the face of an arithmetical blunder which an intelligent schoolboy would have realised long ago, and can still see no harm in those cooked statistics of Mgr. Vaughan's which, three years ago, filled a more plain-spoken Roman Catholic with "shame and indignation."

It seems worth while, therefore, to supplement my former article by laying before the public a few facts about the monasteries during

* I hope soon to reprint my *Tablet* letters for the eyes of a wider public. Father Gerard declines to allow me to publish his replies.

the last three centuries before the Reformation. This is the more necessary, as I altogether despair now of bringing the Abbot to an open comparison between the statements for which (while refusing references) he asks the public to trust his unsupported word, and those contrary statements for which I have already given many references, and am ready to give very many more. He evidently realises that it is safer to suffer any exposures from outside than to expose himself by an attempt to answer them. After all, a commercial bankrupt can live very comfortably on the jointure of his wife; and a controversial bankrupt (as I pointed out in my former article) lives in equal comfort with a powerful and united religious denomination at his back. Moreover, Abbot Gasquet has at present more encouragement than this: for the lamentable lack of original research in England, of which Professor Firth recently complained, has enabled his theories to gain considerable currency even in what ought to be the most trustworthy quarters. The *Athenæum*, with its just and world-wide reputation for learned impartiality, has more than once served as a stalking-horse to some reviewer who champions monastic innocence, but from whom I have tried in vain, through the Editor, to extract a bare reference which would enable me to verify such evidence as he claims to have found in a certain MS. at Canterbury. The *Church Times*, again, published recently a lengthy series of anonymous articles, since reprinted in full under the title of "The English "Monasteries," and in part (strange to say!) as a *Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet; but still anonymously. For this modern theory of monastic innocence runs in curious underground channels! In the first of the *Church Times* articles the author boasts with no uncertain voice of his intimate acquaintance with out-of-the-way mediæval documents: yet a sudden fit of modesty restrains him from signing his articles, and from permitting the publisher to reveal the authorship of his book. Stranger still, he allows one of his chapters to be used in aid of the Roman Catholic propaganda; and the *Catholic Truth Society*, while introducing him to its readers as an ornament of the Anglican Church and of the Society of Antiquaries, still omits to mention his name! Moreover, this Great Unknown fully shares the abhorrence of Abbot Gasquet and of the *Athenæum* reviewer for definite references. Whether on his own ground of the *Church Times* or elsewhere, he has consistently declined to produce his vouchers or to face open criticism; and the Editor has backed him up by suppressing the two brief letters in which I exposed his worst misstatements.* Meanwhile the book is of course assiduously puffed,

* I had already had a similar experience with the *Church Times*. Having published a gross misstatement of Lord Halifax with regard to confession, the editor suppressed the second and more conclusive of two brief letters in which I pointed out its glaring inconsistency with known facts. I have heard this policy of suppression deliberately defended by counter-accusations against other religious papers: if it be indeed true that religion has so baneful an effect on journalism, this of itself would go far to explain that decay of clerical prestige which the *Church Times* so frequently bemoans.

and the author's claims to special accuracy are swallowed by those who have no means of checking his statements and are too candid to suspect his tortuous proceedings. What, however, will probably for a few months add still more to the popularity of Dr. Gasquet's theory is that it has been recently embodied in a novel. Father Benson's "The King's Achievement" is simply a romantic paraphrase of the already too romantic "Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries." Newspaper reviewers, who of course are not obliged to be historical students, have hailed Father Benson as a serious student of history: though in fact he has taken all his points blindly and uncritically at second hand. This is the more disappointing as Father Benson is evidently a real novelist, and might perhaps have become a real historian if he had spent some years in the study of actual historical documents. As it is, he has simply placed modern English characters upon a stage, and among scenery bearing the merest superficial resemblance to the England of Henry VIII. One or two of his figures are charming, though even these plainly owe a great deal to Scott, Thackeray, George Eliot and a whole body of wholesome modern romance, of which it would be vain to seek the counterpart in pre-Reformation times. Whatever Father Benson learnt from childhood upwards in the home of a distinguished Anglican divine—whatever pure and noble ideas he has imbibed during his honourable career in this England where the clergy have lived in temperance and chastity for 300 years, and where the laity in turn have gradually risen superior to their grosser vices of the past*—all these things he puts into the characters he loves, making them move like gracious figures of the present amid the coarse society of 350 years ago. He betrays scarcely an inkling of what Tudor manners were even at their best: the Paston Letters and the writings of his own Sir Thomas More (to go no further) give the lie to half the implications in his novel. Beatrice Atherton runs about alone, at her own pleasure, like any modern American or English girl; one almost sees her drive off tandem, and turns to find her card on the hall-table with *Sesame Club* in the corner. The book swarms with anachronisms, all the more glaring for the cheap profusion of carved oak and stained glass and Wardour Street accessories with which Father Benson loads his stage. Yet one feels that it would have been an excellent novel if he had dealt frankly with the thoughts and feelings of modern Roman Catholics, and left the Monasteries alone.

There have of course been many admirable monks and nuns in all

* The 13th century visitations of Rouen diocese show us that the Archbishop knew 18 per cent. of the parishes in his diocese to possess an unchaste priest; though legal difficulties, and the worse problem of finding better substitutes, compelled him to leave all but a few in their cures. In Italy, as St. Bonaventura assures us, things were worse. An English visitation of 1499 shows 14 priests of notorious unchastity in 10 deaneries (or scarcely more than half the county) of Norfolk. Many of these were very gross cases indeed, yet none of the culprits were ejected. Sir Thomas More, even in the stress of his argument against Tyndall, admitted that clerical unchastity was rife in Wales.

ages: but even as early as the thirteenth century there were many others who chose monastic life from motives of selfishness and idleness; and the majority took their colour from these last rather than from the first. The evidence of monastic decay, long before the Reformation, is simply embarrassing in its mass and variety. It will be convenient therefore if I follow Father Benson's lead, and confine myself mainly to those which he singles out for our admiration—the Sussex houses and the Cluniac order, in contrast to the villainy of Cromwell's Commissioners. I must, however, again warn my readers that I hold no brief for Cromwell or his royal master.* They carried out brutally, recklessly, and often dishonestly, a clearance for which even orthodox Catholics had long since clamoured in England. Already in Piers Plowman (1370) the monasteries are spoken of as deeply decayed and as wasting their great revenues: and the author breaks out into a remarkable prophecy of their future disendowment by the king. Gascoigne, the great Chancellor of Oxford (1450), complains even more frequently of monastic uselessness and waste, and pleads even more strongly for disendowment. Wycliffe, of course, had said the same: but I quote these two authors because they were bitter enemies of Wycliffe and the Lollards. Gower, who also hated Wycliffe, complains of monastic immoralities even more strongly than the Reformer himself. No more glaringly false historical statement has ever been made than the assertion that the evil repute of the monks dates from Henry VIII.'s time. Saints and sinners (as I have shown by evidence which has not been questioned) agreed in complaining of the monks' idleness, extravagance, and immorality: and, so far as I am aware, even the most determined mediæval apologists never venture on a serious defence against these charges. That paradox has been reserved for our own days, now that 300 years of clerical decency have taught even Protestants to stagger at the sordid facts of the Middle Ages, and to admit apologetic arguments which no mediæval theologian ever dreamed of pleading.†

Respectable English folk, therefore, had long been accustomed to serious accusations against monks and nuns at the time when Cromwell and his agents began to visit. The brutality of those agents is in many cases indefensible; but Father Benson has been very badly misled on many points. Firstly, he represents the plunder of the religious houses as having been begun by Cromwell. On the contrary, the story of the monasteries, *as told by the monks themselves*, is frequently a wearisome story of embezzlement and robbery from generation to generation. I will illustrate this here from the real history of Father Benson's own Sussex houses and the Cluniacs. The great priory of Lewes, the most important of all the English Cluniac

* Cf. The Monastic Legend (Simpkin, 1/-) p. 10.

† Here and elsewhere, in arguing from the absence of evidence, I speak of course subject to correction. I only claim to have sought honestly for such evidence, but hitherto in vain.

houses, was almost always in debt, in spite of its rich revenues.* From 1259 to 1317, for which years we have frequent data, the records show us a state of things almost incredible, if it were not borne out by other Cluniac records and by the financial details of the Norman monasteries in the thirteenth century. In 1259 Lewes had raised money illegally by pledging three dependent priories, two of which were now falling into ruins. In 1279 it owed £33,000 in money, with a very considerable deficit in farm stock; and the visitors report, "At "best it will take upwards of twenty years to liquidate its debts." In 1280 they make a general report that the majority of Cluniac houses in England "are much decayed, both spiritually and "financially"—as indeed the details show. In 1290, again, "almost "all houses are ill-managed both spiritually and temporally, and are "heavily in debt." In 1291 "many properties have been alienated to "outsiders;" the priory "is so heavily in debt that there is no hope of "its future recovery, unless remedy be quickly applied": and a similar report is given two years later, when one of its dependent churches is reported as "on the verge of ruin." Next year the prior has paid off only £500 of the debt: then follow a series of gaps in the visitations owing to the French wars. In 1299 the debts are "very great, and "of uncertain extent; wherefore the monastic hospitality and alms "have been much diminished, and there are fewer monks than usual." In 1301 the debt has risen (unless there is a scribe's error) to £220,000! In 1306 there were only thirty-three monks: whereas it was asserted that there had once been sixty. In 1314 the debt had fallen again to £30,000. In 1317 it was reported as still very heavy: "every effort must be made to diminish it." Presently came the Hundred Years' War, and the end of English Cluniac visitations. But a document which has survived by chance lifts the veil for one moment about 1330, and shows us a disputed election in the Priory, during which one of the parties sacked the refectory, carrying off the great gilt cup bequeathed by Prior Foville, with so many other valuables that Lewes was obliged to beg contributions from all its sister-houses in England to make good this deficit. In 1331, a petition to the king stated that the English Cluniacs had fallen to a third of their original numbers,† that they patched up their financial mismanagement by a system of bribery, and that for want of proper visitation "the order "of Cluny is come to shame, and none dare speak of religion"—*i.e.*, of the proper regular discipline. Lastly, in 1489, Pope Innocent VIII. issued a bull which shows that matters had naturally

* Even at the Dissolution, after more than three centuries of mismanagement, its 26 monks enjoyed a net corporate revenue of £9,200 a year in modern currency. Here, and all through this article, I change mediæval figures roughly into modern values, multiplying by 15 in the 13th and 14th centuries, and by 10 in the 15th and 16th.

† This, like nearly all mediæval figures of the kind, is no doubt an exaggeration; two-thirds would perhaps be a nearer estimate.

gone from bad to worse: though here the evils specially complained of are deeper seated than mere mismanagement of revenues.

Take Rusper nunnery, again, of which Father Benson draws so touching a picture, and to which he sends his hero's sister as a nun. It is the subject of only five recorded episcopal visits. Yet in 1442 the Bishop found that the Prioress never accounted for the moneys which passed through her hands, although successive Popes since 1228 had specially insisted upon this obvious safeguard of honesty. In 1478 the equally necessary inventory of the convent goods was equally non-existent. In 1521 "the house was in great decay," and much "burdened with expenses by reason of the prioress's friends and "relations who constantly stayed there." In 1527 the house was again "somewhat ruinous"; and, instead of the pretty picture of the inmates given us by Father Benson, plain history shows that the dilapidated convent was inhabited only by a prioress and two nuns. It will be noticed that only one of the five visits failed to reveal carelessness or dishonesty, and such other materials as we have for tracing the revenues of this nunnery from 1291 to the Dissolution show them in a state of steady decay. Rusper, however, was orderly compared with the neighbouring nunnery of Easebourne, to which, we take it, the sister of Father Benson's hero might just as well have happened to go. Here again the finances show a steady decline during the last two and a half centuries before the Dissolution. We have the details of six visitations. In 1441 the Bishop found that the prioress's extravagance had run the house into debt to the amount of about £400. She was constantly out of her convent, feasted sumptuously wherever she went, and wore a mantle of which the fur trimmings were valued at £50. She "sweated" the nuns, and gave them no money for their work.* The Bishop therefore took the financial management of the house into his own hands: yet, even so, the debt increased within the next eight years from £400 to £650, while the net income had now sunk to £225 a year. In 1478, it was discovered that the prioress had pledged convent valuables to the extent of £150 for a very disgraceful purpose. In 1485 and 1489 the house was reported to be miserably poor, though it now supported only five nuns instead of ten. In 1521 the cloisters were out of repair, and the prioress never accounted for the revenues: nor had she done so even at the next visit (1524): moreover, it was now discovered that convent goods had again been secretly alienated, under circumstances as disgraceful as in 1478.† Father Benson takes us, again, to Durford,

* As a matter of fact, the nuns were forbidden to receive such private moneys, on peril of their souls; and the mere fact of their making this complaint to the bishop speaks volumes for the degradation of the Benedictine rule.

† This is not the place to enter into the *moral* details of the visitations, but any reader who verifies these references in vol. ix. of the *Sussex Archæological Collections*, will understand why the mediæval nuns were often spoken of by their contemporaries in language which fair-minded Protestants would hesitate to use nowadays.

where he claims special pity for the monks. They were indeed in Cromwell's time "far in debt and great decay": but the nine inmates then enjoyed an income of £980; and, though the Abbey had suffered 200 years before from the ravages of war, the scanty notices we possess point here also to mismanagement as the main cause of their ruin.

The rest of the Sussex evidence I must sum up very briefly. In 1518 the Bishop pointed out that six different priories "had suffered "great loss and diminished rents" through want of proper custody for the common seal—or, in plain words, through embezzlement: and they are warned also to discontinue the practice of feeding their hunting dogs on the broken victuals which should go to the poor. In 1478 the monks of Mitchelham were found to have sold the convent jewels to pay for a lawsuit against other monks; the two priory mills were in ruins; the prior had presented his accounts only once in 28 years; had sold books, papers, horses and timber for his own profit, and had embezzled certain sums left for the benefit of the donors' souls. At Sele in 1441 the prior was not accustomed to present his accounts, and had "wasted and consumed the goods of the house." His successor, during 14 years of office, "devoured" (*i.e.*. made away with) "11 sheep, 26 draught oxen, 80 young wether beasts, 80 swine ". . . 2 mazers (valuable cups) bound with silver uncovered, together "with many salt-cellars, chalices, and cruets of silver, granges full of "corn, the household furniture, carts, etc.: besides running the house "into debt for more than £2,000 and reducing the income to £80 "a year." His successor distinguished himself by forging the convent seal and thus alienating some of the endowments to his own profit. The next prior obtained his office by a bribe of £100, and for eight years "wasted the property of the house and allowed the buildings to "fall into decay." A dispute over the ownership of the priory lands may palliate, though scarcely excuse, the conduct of these last two priors. The priory of Pynham was sequestrated in 1441 by the Bishop until it should free itself from debt. In 1478 its revenues were much diminished, and its buildings, vestments and books utterly dilapidated. In the same year Tortington Priory was also very ruinous. In 1527 other dilapidations of the property had taken place. At Hardham in 1478 the buildings were very ruinous, the prior had rendered no account for more than four years, and the jewels and plate were said to be in the hands of a neighbouring rector. At Warbleton in 1441 the prior was negligent, extravagant, and remiss in rendering accounts: in 1473 one of the monks was accused of having embezzled two gold cups and played fast and loose with the common seal: the buildings were ruinous, and the inmates reduced from five to two. At Boxgrove in 1518 the prior rendered no accounts. The costly jewels given by Rufus to Battle Abbey disappeared within about 20 years, many of them "either lost or fraudulently stolen." The numbers of the monks there had fallen, between 1100 and 1530, from

sixty to seventeen. These seventeen monks, who even then enjoyed a revenue of £8,800 *net*, had allowed their library, one of the finest in the kingdom, to fall into a miserable state.

This then is what can be gleaned from even such extremely fragmentary records as have survived. There were altogether 22 houses of monks and nuns in Sussex;* the foregoing details give us a glimpse of the commercial morality which reigned in twelve of them. I have been obliged to treat this matter at some length, since there is no other way of expressing the cumulative force of the evidence, and of enabling the reader to judge how far Father Benson is justified in representing Cromwell and his agents as the only spoilers of monastic goods. Exaggerated as is the novelist's description of the cartloads of jewels carried to London, there can be no doubt that the Cromwellian visitors did abstract many valuables: but it is equally certain that what was lost in this way bore a very small proportion to the sums wasted and embezzled by the Religious themselves.

But Father Benson misrepresents far more cruelly the measures taken by Cromwell to keep the monks within due bounds. The accusation originated (I believe) with Blunt, who was not bound to know better. It comes fairly naturally, again, from the pen of Father Benson, who is accustomed to the freedom enjoyed by modern English monks, and often sees them wander almost as much abroad as though they had never taken the vows. But Abbot Gasquet, as the Head of the English Benedictines, might at least have remembered Clause LXVI. of that Rule which even the simplest monk is bound to know almost by heart. The latter part of this clause runs: "The "monastery, if possible, should be so constructed that all necessary "works . . . may be done inside the monastery, that the monks be "not compelled to wander outside, which is altogether unprofitable to "their souls. *Moreover, we will that this rule be often read aloud in "the congregation, in order that no monk may excuse himself on the "score of ignorance.*" Poor St. Benedict! Little did he dream that one of his most honoured sons would one day impute to an enemy, as an unpardonable sin, the strict enforcement of this never-to-be ignored clause!† No incident could better illustrate the fatal dangers of arguing, as so many do, from modern Romanism to the Middle Ages. This clause, of which Abbot Gasquet seems to know not even the first word, was treated by mediæval commentators with all the respect due to its strict wording. Some (*e.g.*, St. Gregory) would even forbid the abbots and priors to take business journeys, except on rare occasions. Another would refuse to allow any but the maturest and soberest monks to go out, even to visit a dying parent! The Commentators enforce these prohibitions with such explicit warnings,

* This is a very liberal estimate, including four or five houses which had probably practically disappeared some time before the Reformation.

† *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, I. 256, 264.

and such plain-spoken citations of Dinah and other Scriptural instances, as leave no possible doubt of their meaning. Yet the monastic vagabondage which so scandalised the laity in Chaucer's time was already rife even in the golden thirteenth century. The Cluniac visitors complain of it bitterly, and an Archbishop of York would not even permit healthy field-labour to some monks because it implied occasions of sin. After reading Chaucer's "Shipman's Tale" side by side with Martene's commentary on Clause LXVI., one might well wonder whether historical misrepresentation ever went further than this modern complaint against Cromwell for enforcing upon the monks one of the most emphatic and necessary provisions of their rule! The fact that he was able to count with certainty upon their disobedience on this point is adequate proof (if such were needed) of their degradation in Henry VIII.'s reign.

Space fails me to deal with other gross historical errors in Father Benson's work, and these pages are not the place for a full discussion of the darkest side of monastic life. The whole book is (as I have said above) a string of twentieth century notions thinly veneered with mediævalism. His description of life at Lewes Priory is taken (apparently at second hand) from the Rule and the *Consuetudines*, which is very much as if future historians should try to reconstitute modern English barrack life solely from the Army Regulations and the handbooks of martial law. He knows nothing of the remarkable thirteen century "Dialogue between a Cistercian and a Cluniac," which shows the deep decay of strict observance even 250 years before the Dissolution. Moreover, even the fragmentary records of the English Cluniacs, though they give us demonstrably only an extremely small fraction of the actual facts—probably not one-tenth or even one-twentieth*—are enough to scatter his pious fictions to the blast. Our most direct evidence covers a period of 87 years, from a chance mention by Matthew Paris in 1248 to an equally chance record in Bishop Grandisson's Register of 1334. The period covered by these years is one of the most favourable that could possibly be chosen by a defender of monastic morality, since on the one hand the Franciscan reform was still a reality, while on the other the worst decay had not yet set in. The period ends (1) before the Black Death, which is asserted by apologists to have shaken the monastic system so badly, and (2) at the very beginning of that long Cluniac anarchy which was brought on by the French wars—an anarchy which finally provoked the censures and interference of Pope Innocent VIII. The statistics which I am about to give are therefore extraordinarily favourable for Father Benson, since they represent a time when Cluniac discipline was notoriously far purer than in Henry VIII.'s reign. The monks who were visited during this period from 1248 to 1334

* The estimate of the exact value of the evidence is too complicated to attempt here: I hope to deal with it soon in detail. But I have long been trying in vain to induce monastic apologists to discuss it with me.

numbered, at an extreme estimate, 446, or not one-eighth of the monks and nuns at present in the United Kingdom. If therefore we multiply the offences proved against them by eight, in order to bring them into terms of the monks and nuns at this present moment among us, these Cluniac records would give us 152 unchaste inmates, mostly priors of monasteries, 40 murderers who together had been concerned in the death of 16 victims and had slain eight of them within the very walls of the church, 24 forgers, 16 convicted of openly embezzling public moneys, besides countless other less flagrant dishonesties, eight drunken and irreligious priors, 16 monks imprisoned by the town authorities for other offences, eight who had mutilated monastic servants, eight outlawed ruffians lying in wait on the highways to slay their religious superiors. Moreover, even these figures would need to be multiplied by 22 if the monks and nuns were proportionately as numerous in modern England as in Henry VIII.'s reign. Suppose then for one moment that a Parliamentary enquiry were instituted this very year, and that the Commissioners found records of 6,000 such criminals as these among our monasteries during the past 87 years. Suppose moreover that even these records were avowedly extremely fragmentary, and that the Commission calculated them to represent, at the most, only about one-tenth of the actual facts. Lastly, suppose that we knew the Orders to be already on an inclined plane on which they would slide lower and lower for centuries to come—as even the most determined apologists acknowledge that the monasteries did decline steadily from the thirteenth century to the Dissolution.* How many voices under such circumstances would be raised to defend these Orders in Parliament or elsewhere? With what feelings would ordinary respectable folk look forward to the probability that, four centuries hence, plausible Romanist historians, backed up by enthusiastic and romantic converts, would spread abroad the belief that those monasteries had been on the whole seminaries of virtue, and their dissolution an act of unredeemed iniquity? For myself, I feel constrained to apologise to the monks and nuns now among us for even the momentary use of their name in connection with facts which can be proved to the hilt against their mediæval predecessors. These whom we see in modern England are a small minority, living amid a healthy public opinion, and under a system of law and police such as no man even dreamt of in the Middle Ages. Catholicism has long since learned that her only chance of competition with other creeds lies in real purity of life: so that, although clerical scandals are (I believe) extremely common in Southern Italy and Spain, the life of the Romanist clergy in Protestant countries is such on the whole as to command the respect even of non-Catholics. I would therefore emphatically disclaim any intention to hint evil against the monasteries

* Bishop Nicke's first visitation of Norwich diocese (1514) gives 7 per cent. accused of incontinence; this would make, in terms of our present population, 5,800 unchaste monks and nuns in this year 1906.

now in England, apart from the danger lest the convents should become sweating-houses of cheap and insanitary labour, in the absence of such proper supervision as our law enforces in the case of other workshops. But I hope I have here written enough to show how little historical justification Father Benson's book can claim; since the record of the Sussex houses in general—and indeed of the mediæval monasteries in general—is quite as bad as that Cluniac record which I have just quoted as a specimen. The writings of such disciplinary experts as Busch, Ambrose of Camaldoli, and Trittenheim—all of them distinguished monks and heads of houses—read in some places like an evil dream.* The fact is that, with all his real ability and the engaging personality shown in his pages, Father Benson has written a novel as false to history as the shilling shockers of our youth, with their diabolical Jesuits and walled-in nuns. Nobody in Henry VIII.'s time, orthodox or unorthodox, would have recognised his description of monastic life as even approximately true to the facts of that day. It bears, in fact, just about the same semblance of reality as the sentimental pink-and-white plaster statues in a Roman Catholic religious shop bear to the actual living aspect of spiritual athletes like St. Bernard and St. Francis. Inside and outside the cloister walls, his monks are as unreal as his heroine.

But he might possibly plead, with Æsop's trumpeter, that this *rôle* of historian has only been thrust on him by indolent reviewers: that he himself is no disciplined unit in the ranks of original research, but simply a poet whose mission it is to inspire the fighters with his music. Yet, even so, it is worth while to remonstrate with him seriously for this once. After all, the average novel has a wider circulation than the average history: and I cannot believe that Father Benson would willingly propagate such strange misconceptions as those which I have here exposed.

To this article Father Benson replied in the June number of the CONTEMPORARY REVIEW. I begged his leave, both before and after the publication of his article, to have it reprinted within the same covers as my own, under conditions which would have left him both the last word in controversy, and the more advantageous position with regard to possible profits. This offer he has declined, from no unworthy motives, as I am convinced in his case, but from a sincere dislike of what seems to him a perpetuation of controversy. To me, on the contrary, it seems that we shall never get at the truth on this and similar historical questions until the public is permitted to read and compare, within the same covers, the pleas of the opposing advocates; and, though Father Benson's refusal compels me to republish my two articles alone, I cannot help thinking that in this case the inclusion of his reply would have made it even more plain to the unprejudiced reader how little there is to be said, from the strictly historical point of view, by even an earnest and able advocate against the dissolution of the monasteries *in itself*, apart from the indefensible methods by which that measure was in part carried out. It

* A good deal of further evidence on this point (though not one-tenth of what I could produce) may be found in my *Monastic Legend.*

is at least significant that while Father Benson, who alone has taken up my repeated challenges, admits that he has not fully studied the monastic question in the periods preceding the Reformation, on the other hand writers like Abbot Gasquet, who profess to have favourable evidence for the state of the monasteries in that earlier period, cannot be induced under any circumstances to meet openly such plain evidence as I have produced, from orthodox pre-Reformation authors, to prove that theories of monastic innocence are of purely modern invention. The reader who is curious to see what damning exposures these apologists are content to suffer in silence should refer to my *Monastic Legend*, to my article in the CONTEMPORARY REVIEW for December, 1905, and to the resulting correspondence in the Romanist *Tablet*, December 9th, 1905—February 10th, 1906: especially my letter of January 27th.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MONASTERIES.

A REJOINDER.

I WILLINGLY recognise Father Benson's courtesy and honesty at the bottom of the hard things he feels bound to say about me, of his silence on what seem to me important points, and of his occasional misapprehensions. The unfair "stab" which he imputes to me lies, not in my actual words, but in his own paraphrase, coloured necessarily by his own feelings. Nor had I any idea of imputing to him the literary bad faith which I do impute to some others; though I own that, if my words conveyed this impression to other minds than his, the blame must lie to some extent with me. But I do not feel that the three particular phrases which he adduces can bear that invidious interpretation when considered in their actual context. Each of them refers plainly not to alleged concealment of facts, but to alleged ignorance. To take his first instance: I speak of him as "cruelly "misrepresenting" Cromwell by stigmatising the latter's order for the enclosure of the Religious as a novel and unjustifiable manœuvre. "It "was pretty evident that a rigorous confinement would breed "discontent," so writes Father Benson, without one hint that such confinement was in fact emphatically enjoined by the Rule to which these monks were by profession pledged; and that disciplinarians had for centuries protested against any relaxation as extremely perilous to monastic morality. I cannot see how this statement—which he does not attempt to justify—can be called any less than a cruel misrepresentation of Cromwell. Yet so far was I from hinting dishonesty on Father Benson's part, that I took pains to explain how he had evidently been misled. He saw (I said) modern monks wandering about abroad as if the Rule were non-existent; he had argued, like others, from modern Romanism to the Middle Ages; and he had taken this particular blunder straight from Abbot Gasquet, who, however, had not the same excuse for ignorance. Both here and elsewhere I tried to show (1) how frankly he had used the novelist's right of taking history at second-hand; and (2) how sadly his trusted authorities had

misled him; so that his very success as an artist resulted in the further propagation of false history. I looked upon him as an able and honest counsel whose attorney had primed him with a faulty brief; and his reply has but strengthened this conviction. Although the real point at issue between us is the state of the monasteries under Henry VIII., he seems to treat it sometimes almost more as a personal than as an historical question. "It is myself that is in question," he writes; "we "are not discussing the thirteenth nor even the fifteenth century, but "the sixteenth," and thus he excuses himself for not having studied earlier documents, while accusing me of "almost incredible" perverseness or "adroitness" in arguing from a complete series of forty reports, of which only seven referred directly to the sixteenth century. Yet I carefully gave all the dates for my readers to judge; nor can I understand why, without vouchsafing further reasons, he dismisses my argument as worthless. It is admitted by both parties in this discussion that the monasteries were purer in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries than in the sixteenth. Inevitably, therefore, after exhausting the direct evidence for the sixteenth century, we ask, "What evidence have we for earlier times? Were the monks even "then, as a body, such men as we should care to have amongst us "now?" I produced statistics from "the Golden Age of Monasticism" which seemed to me to supply a clear negative; but to him this whole argument appears a mockery; apparently because, his own studies having turned mainly on later times, he therefore denies my right to travel beyond his book. Yet I had explained that I criticised this not as a novel, but as an unconscious travesty of historical fact; and he has now no possible right to reject valuable witnesses because they were not of his own calling—to exalt, in short, his own personal limitations into a canon of historical truth or falsehood. Moreover, his own mentor, Abbot Gasquet, goes back a whole century earlier than I do, appealing for support to those same visitation documents which, when I quote them, Father Benson dismisses with loathing as "episcopal "police-lists." The real difference here between myself and the Abbot is that I give my references, while he steadily declines to give his. Nor can he now justify this refusal on the score of dignity; for in the preface of his new edition he steps down from that pedestal to revile me, (in the French of Stratford attë Bowe,) as a literary ragman. It is this refusal of the commonest guarantees of literary good faith—not, as Father Benson asserts, our difference of opinion—which has determined me to pursue this subject so far. Indeed, it would seem almost a counsel of despair which prompted Father Benson to waste, in an attempt to prejudge this question, space which would have been more profitably employed in dealing with my facts. He quotes two living historians as regarding the Abbot's work with such "deep respect" that I have no right to attack it; as if anything could ever be proved if the consent of two men, however eminent, carried a power of

tribunicial veto at the bar of history! Moreover, one of his pair is very far from bearing a name to conjure with in this matter; while the other, Dr. Gairdner, has volunteered to me the statement that he considers my exposure of the Abbot "a powerful indictment!"* So far, therefore, as Father Benson's argument ever had any real force, it now turns against himself.

As for his so-called parallel to my statistics, it is painful to deal with anything so slipshod. With all his license of choosing a single favourable fortnight for generalisation, he still cannot produce anything remotely approaching the percentage of immoralities revealed by Nicke's visitation of 1514 in the Norwich diocese. For a real parallel to my figures he must show, not four criminous clerks for the whole country during one particular fortnight, but over 75 in a single diocese like Norwich, within a space of three years.† He knows very well that he would need not only great diligence, but exceptional good fortune to produce even one-tenth of this proportion after years of patient study; and it is a pity that he did not work out his own figures, instead of satisfying himself with the most superficial pretence of an argument to throw at me. As a further radical difference—if such were needed—a criminous clerk is ignominiously ejected in these days; before the Reformation, ejections for unchastity were not only comparatively rare, but practically unknown for a first offence. As for his claim of imitating my methods in gratuitously multiplying the recorded figures by four, this is an admirable instance of the misconceptions resulting from those hole-and-corner historical ideas which prevail in his own communion. I have no mere surmises, but definite evidence to show that a large proportion of cases have been omitted from many of the mediæval documents by which, in default of others more complete, I support facts already gleaned from fuller sources. I have repeatedly challenged discussion on this point with Abbot Gasquet, Father Gerard, and the anonymous F. S. A. who writes alternately for the *Church Times* and for the *Catholic Truth Society;* indeed, I repeated this challenge in a footnote appended to the very statistics at which Father Benson carps. They persistently refuse this discussion, finding it safer to throw mud at me from the comparative security of a preface, a Romanist journal, or an anonymous article; and meanwhile their wilful silence enables Father Benson to write as if the reasons which I have vainly offered to his own champions were as empty as these mockeries which he flaunts in parody of what he calls "my methods!"

Wherever else he seems to make a real point against me, it is, I

* This letter, written by Dr. Gairdner to stop the use of his high authority in support of arguments which have not always his approval, was published, with his permission, in *Church Bells* for May 12, 1906.

† He generalises from four cases: I from 22. His figures would work out at only 104 cases in a year out of 24,000 clergy: mine are 22 in 3 years out of 332 monks and nuns. I work this out in my *Monastic Legend.*

cannot help thinking, by misunderstanding my words. In one case this was no doubt partly my fault; I should either have been more explicit about his alleged anachronisms or have left them alone. I never dreamed of blaming him for not adopting bastard linguistic archaisms, or for keeping Tudor vermin out of sight. I referred chiefly to his importation of deeper modern refinements into those times; to the implication of his whole book that Tudor Catholicism had all the virtues and *inward* qualities of modern society, with something more. Nobody could guess from his book how brutally girls were often maltreated, and how hard they found it to escape obscene talk even in the best society—as Sir Thomas More not only complains, but shows by his own example. Father Benson refuses to believe in the word of a man like Layton because he tells Cromwell "some tales (of "monastic vice) to make you laugh." Yet More tells with great circumstance and most undeniable relish, quite unnecessarily, a monastic story more unsavoury than any of Layton's; a story, moreover, sufficient in itself to disprove Abbot Gasquet's assertions of the strict discipline exercised by conventual visitors. [More's "English "Works," pp. 1035 and 154 (properly 134).] On this, and similar vital points, the novelist antedates by centuries the progress of inward civilisation. Moreover, he spends more than a page in disproving an assertion which I never made. When I complain of his letting his heroine "run about *alone*," it is no answer to confront me with quotations which either ignore the crucial word here italicised, or definitely show (as two out of his four do) that the ladies had in fact attendants waiting on them. I know very well that Tudor ladies enjoyed more freedom than their ancestresses, or than Italian ladies; but I believe such freedom to have been far, at its best, from the "almost Victorian" liberty which Father Benson asserts them to have enjoyed; nor can I believe that a self-respecting girl like Beatrice would have gone alone to interview her *fiancé* in his own rooms. But I am told that I err in supposing her to have been unattended on that occasion. I have just re-read the chapter (pt. II., chap. IX.) and feel sure that the author, on re-reading it himself, will admit my impression to have been pardonable, if not correct. Meanwhile, if he will produce evidence rebutting my criticism as it stands, I will acknowledge my error as publicly as I asserted it.

Of his other criticisms I can only say that they seem to me to repose, partly on misreading of my words and partly on his own unfamiliarity with the facts of history. I did not, for instance, say that "if Religious are rich, it must be through oppression or greed," nor can I even guess at the words which he read in this sense. What he says, again, in excuse for their failure to keep accounts and inventories, simply proves how little he has read of papal, conciliar, and episcopal injunctions. I could point out as many mistakes of this kind as there are pages in his article, and am willing to do so in any paper he

chooses, under criticism from him or from the Abbot's earlier champion, Father Gerard. He will no doubt brand me here again with the invidious title of "controversialist," yet I am in fact as hard-worked a professional man as himself, and controversy has brought me, as probably it will always bring me, pecuniary loss without any corresponding public gain. For the last ten years I have been working at a book on mediæval life which I hope to publish now in a few weeks. In this work I have found myself confronted at every turn by what seem to me the reckless, and sometimes even deliberate, misrepresentations of Romanist apologists. That is why I have stepped aside to clear the ground of weeds to which more distinguished scholars have neither time nor inclination to stoop. I have always offered to print replies at my own expense; and, if I had nothing but controversial tricks to help me, I should long ago have been made mincemeat of by Father Gerard, who has probably written two or three hundred pages of polemics to one of mine. As it is, Father Gerard has steadily declined to face my evidence from pre-Reformation documents, even in the comparative safety of the *Tablet*, which could not print some of my most important proofs.

Moreover, Father Benson seems curiously unable to realise how far his own book is merely destructive, or how much he and his friends depend on "peering through the keyholes" of history, on ferreting out evil from a king's private love-letters, and on studiously blackening men and women who are as silent and helpless now, and who once suffered as cruelly, as any monk or nun. All this is the nemesis of an old evil tradition which has allowed men to use tricks for The Cause which would be reprobated in private life, with the result that Church history cannot yet be written, on either side, with the same judicial calm as other histories. No judge can sum up from concealed evidence, and the confidence trick has no more place in history than in law. So long, therefore, as one side deliberately rests on alleged favourable evidence from the episcopal registers, so long must others emphasise even to weariness the damning evidence which those books undoubtedly contain. The workaday Present always cuts a poor figure beside the meretricious fancies of the Past, and it is only fair to remind Father Benson that nearly one-third of St. Augustine's *City of God* is devoted to purely destructive criticism of the polytheism which many of his contemporaries longed to have back again. So we also can never realise fully the spiritual possibilities of the age in which we live, unless we make these periodical clearances of interested mis-statements which would persuade us to hark back to the past.

G. G. COULTON.

P.S.—The above was already in type when I saw in the *Guardian* (June 6th, p. 937) a quotation from Newman which cuts one knot that had hardly seemed worthy of unravelling at the expense of a

couple of pages. Having no time to verify it at the British Museum, I give it here simply on the high authority of the *Guardian*, which quotes it from the Roman Catholic *Month* (January, 1903):—

"'Nothing could be better' [Newman wrote] 'than an historical "'review. But who would bear it? *Unless one doctored all one's* "'*facts, one would be thought a bad Catholic.*'"

Compare the words I have here italicised with Father Benson's complaint (p. 827) that my attitude shows me to have "already decided that no Catholic priest "could be anything but a falsifier of history." Even if I had not already exposed Romanist falsifications wholesale, with plain chapter and verse, and without eliciting any real evidence in their favour, I should now only need (1) to collocate Newman's words with the undeniable fact that Abbot Gasquet is far from "being thought a bad "Catholic," and (2) to draw the obvious deduction that the very completeness of Father Benson's good faith has helped to make him the unconscious mouthpiece of that "doctored history" for which he is proud to own his debt to "the greatest Roman Catholic historian of "our day."

The Author has already published a series of Essays on pre-Reformation Religious History, written from orthodox pre-Reformation documents, under the title of *Medieval Studies* (Simpkin, Marshall & Co.). These are (1) *The Monastic Legend*, (2) *Guelf and Ghibelline* (1s. nett each), (3) *Sidelights on the Franciscans*, (4) *Medieval Puritanism*, (5) *Romanism and Morality* (6d. each nett).

Religious Education Before the Reformation.

BY

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

BOTH Roman Catholic and High Church papers have lately attempted to contrast the present state of religious education with what they imagine it to have been before the Reformation. There are few more tempting fallacies than that which Sterne has good-humouredly pilloried for all time in his "They order this matter better "in France." Whatever seems amiss in the world in which our lot is cast, we are quick to imagine some golden world in which all was the opposite of this ungrateful present. The fitness of things seems to require it, and we feel that there ought to be—that there *must* somewhere be—historical evidence for it. It may therefore be worth while, at this particular moment, to confront this fond dream with the real facts, especially since plausible attempts have been made, in the name of serious history, to misrepresent those facts. The editor of the *Catholic Times* quotes Abbot Gasquet as establishing the existence of a pre-reformation England in which education was all that it should have been, and all that it now, alas! is not! One of his correspondents, bolder still, has gathered from the same historian that there was "an age when there would have been no difficulties over an Educa-"tión Bill, a time when the Church had it all its own way, and yet the "Bible was taught . . . when such immense portions of Scripture were "committed to memory, and that by Catholics." Such grotesque travesties of the actual facts are current not only among those who have most temptation to see one side of the question alone, but even among moderate Anglicans. They have been so often repeated, supported with such a specious show of serious evidence, and suffered so contemptuously or so supinely by those who are best qualified to contradict them, that many well-read men accept them now almost without question. Yet this theory that the pre-reformation times were an age of thorough and widespread religious instruction not only breaks down under any fairly wide view of the actual documents, but is contradicted (as I hope to prove) even by those apologetic writings

of Sir Thomas More, on which, by means of partial quotations, it has been mainly built.

Let me begin with the golden thirteenth century. At the Provincial Council of Oxford, in 1222, Stephen Langton enjoined, "Let the archdeacons at their visitations see that . . . the priests can "rightly pronounce at least the formula of consecration (in the Mass), "and that of baptism, and that they clearly understand the meaning of "these two formulas." This injunction (which was repeated in a later Council of 1237) reveals an abyss of clerical ignorance at which we may well stagger. In an age when the Bible was in Latin, all the Church services in Latin, and only a small fraction even of popular religious books could be obtained in the vulgar tongue, it was necessary for the Provincial Councils to take elaborate precautions for ensuring that parish priests knew just enough Latin to pronounce, and understand, two every-day formulas of half-a-dozen words each! Nor are we left to the inferences, however inevitable, drawn from these injunctions; for we have on record the actual examination, in this same year 1222, of a number of curates who had long served dean and chapter livings of Salisbury. The Curate of Sonning, who had been four years in priest's orders, was asked to construe the first words of the canon of the Mass—*Te igitur clementissime Pater*—"We pray "Thee, therefore, most merciful Father," etc. The report is, "He knew "not the case of the word *Te*, nor by what it was governed; and "having been bidden to look closely what part of the sentence could "most properly govern *Te*, he replied: '*Pater:* for He governeth all "'things.' We asked him what *clementissime* was, or what case, or "how it was declined: he knew not. We asked him what was "*clemens:* he knew not. Moreover [he knew no music and] knew by "heart no part of the divine service or of the psalter. Moreover, he "said that it seemed to him indecent to be examined by the dean, "since he was already ordained. . . . He is sufficiently illiterate." The rest tried to concert a "passive resistance" to the examination, and for a while refused to answer: but at last their conspiracy broke down, and it is registered that the Curate of Hurst, six years a priest, "is "young, and knows nothing." The Curate of Erburgefield, four years a priest, was also examined in the canon of the Mass, "and he knew "nothing, either of reading or of singing." The Curate of Sandhurst had been four years there, and "could give no answers" to the same simple questions. The Curate of Ruscombe, nearly ten years a priest, "knows nothing." It must be borne in mind firstly that this Latin of which the five curates could not even stumble through the first line is the essential and most solemn portion of the Mass, and could almost be learnt by heart in a single day by one who really knew Latin: and secondly, that no measures were taken to get rid of any of these priests. It is possible that for dean and chapter livings curates were hired in the cheapest market, as was notoriously the case with monastic

livings: yet even so it is startling to find five such incapables in seventeen churches. The contemporary register of Eudes Rigaud, of Rouen, one of the greatest of mediæval prelates, gives almost equally startling results. One candidate, set to construe and parse three verses of the Bible (Heb. iv. 13-15) thought *aperta* ("opened") was a noun, imagined that *compati* ("to be touched with") had something to do with "opening," and parsed "without" as a causal conjunction. As he was also "ill-famed of quarrelling and incontinence," the archbishop decided not to admit him to the coveted benefice. Another cleric, having to construe *annuus* ("annual") dimly thought that it meant "often," and, when asked "how often?" replied "daily." A third, whom the archbishop found "unable to read properly or to "construe," promptly gave notice of appeal to the Pope! We get similar evidence again from Germany in the fifteenth century. Johann Busch (*de Ref. Mon.* I. xiv.) tells us how he held an archidiaconal visitation at the important town of Halle, and found one incumbent who, even with a little friendly help and after mature consideration, could not name the simple words of consecration of the Mass, "This is "My Body," or "This is the Cup of My Blood." He offered, however, to find them in the Missal: but when a book was brought he pointed to the wrong place: though he proved able to read through the canon "after the fashion of secular priests."* Busch consulted with the doctors as to the validity of this man's consecrations; they agreed to hope for the best, but took the precaution of exchanging the holy wafers which he had on hand for a fresh batch consecrated by a more trustworthy colleague. Of one other obvious precaution—getting rid of the ignorant priest—there was no question. As St. Bonaventura had said two hundred years before, "If we do get "rid of them, how shall we get any better to fill their places?" For, while sinners mocked at the ignorance of the clergy, saints and philosophers lamented alike the magnitude of the evil and the difficulty of reform. Scholars too often went up to the mediæval universities (as Dr. Rashdall points out) without enough Latin to follow the lectures properly; nor was there any definite theological training for the ordinary student.† Moreover, large numbers of the parish clergy had never been to a university at all. The episcopal registers supply the most curious evidence on this point, showing that there were two distinct categories of parish clergy. On the one hand

* It is obvious how far these fragmentary indications from orthodox sources go to corroborate Tyndale's "I dare say that there be 20,000 priests, curates, this day in England, and not so few, that cannot give you the right English unto this text in the Paternoster, *Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in coelo et in terra*, and the answer thereto:" and the record of Bishop Hooper's visitation in 1552 which showed "scores of clergy who could not tell who was the author of the Lord's Prayer, or where it was to be found."—Tyndale's works, vol. III. (Parker Soc.), p. 75 and note.

† *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, II., 701. Dr. Rashdall adds: "It is necessary to assert emphatically that the 'religious education' of a 'bygone Oxford,' in so far as it ever had any existence, was an inheritance not from the Middle Ages but from the Reformation."

were the beneficed clergy, generally belonging to the rich and influential classes, and of whom about 75 per cent. had been presented with livings not only before they had taken holy orders, but even in their youth or their boyhood. The first act of such clerics, on receiving their benefices, was often to go to the university. On the other hand were the poor curates, who might or might not have studied, but who were generally doomed to vegetate on the lowest wages, while the fruits of their parishes were mainly consumed by absentees.*

In a Church where the rectors were often schoolboys and the first requisite for a curate was that he should be cheap and unambitious, it was unlikely that any high standard could be maintained, even in such learning as was otherwise possible under mediæval conditions. "There are," writes St. Bonaventura, "so many inexperienced clerics "that, even if they be well taught in grammar and other knowledge, "yet where 100 or more rectors and vicars are gathered together, "there are scarcely any who have in fact enough knowledge of the "Scriptures to manage either the souls committed to their care, or "other things necessary for salvation." He speaks here specially of Italy, and says that things were better in France and England. But St. Thomas Aquinas, writing at Paris, complains of "the inexperience "of many priests, who in some parts are found to be so ignorant that "they cannot even speak Latin, and among whom very few are found "who have learnt Holy Scripture." Roger Bacon, writing about the same time in England, and wishing to give an instance of mere parrot-learning, says "just as boys gabble through the Psalter which "they have learnt, and as clerks and country priests recite the Church "services, of which they know little or nothing, like brute beasts." Gerson, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, speaks equally strongly and far more frequently on this subject. He contrasts with what he calls the restless and ill-digested Scripture studies of the heretics the supineness of even "great prelates," who neglect "the "wine of sacred wisdom" and cry, "What is this ye say to us of faith? "It is enough that we are Christians, in good simplicity: that is "enough; for he who pries into majesty shall be oppressed by its "glory; and there is no need to seek things so lofty for us." Again he asks, "Are all ecclesiastics bound to study God's Law? It would "seem so . . . yet on the other side it may be argued that to assert "this is to place by far the greater part of ecclesiastics outside the "way of salvation, and to assert that they are doomed to damnation." He speaks of the lamentable lack of religious books of any kind among the parish clergy, and complains that there was no organised attempt to multiply good writings against the rising tide of infidelity: to this supineness, and to the ignorance of the beneficed clergy, he

* I hope to explain this in detail, with statistics from the registers, on some future occasion.

attributes a great deal of what he calls the notorious decay of the Catholic Church. Finally, complaining somewhat rhetorically in the person of Holy Church to the Pope, he cries, "What priest wilt thou "give me who knoweth God's Law!" (Vol. I., p. 349 c. De Laud Script. Consid. X.-XII.; Vol. I., pp. 204 A, 268 A, 349 C. Vol. II., 552 A; cf. I 205 F, 208 C, 339 A-C). Nor were the monks better than the parish clergy in this respect. Popes and prelates alike, when providing that the Monastic Rule or other similar injunctions should be read aloud, ordained that these should be read not only in Latin but also in the vulgar tongue: and it was taken as quite natural that the most pious lay-brethren could not follow the sense of the Nicene Creed during mass. The friars did indeed revive the study of the Bible among the clergy: but they did little to spread the knowledge of the actual text among the laity, who were fed almost as much on glosses and pious embroideries as on the plain facts of Scripture history. Even St. Bonaventura, in his famous "Meditations on the life of Christ," alloys the Gospel story with a good 20 per cent. of sheer romance, based upon his own surmises of what might have happened, or on revelations vouchsafed to "a holy "brother of our Order." These additions, it need hardly be said, mostly tend to give the Virgin Mary a prominence or an authority which the Evangelists have failed to give her. Chaucer's keen eye noted this habit of the friars, and he shows us too how much more the popular mind was attracted by these apocryphal legends than by the bare truth. His clerk, Nicholas, speaking to the Carpenter about Noah's flood, has no doubt that the latter will specially remember the least Biblical feature of that event as conceived in the later Middle Ages—the refusal of Noah's wife to embark until she has drunk one more pot of ale with her jolly gossips ashore!

Nor are the instances which I have hitherto quoted rare and exceptional; the evidence of clerical ignorance all through the Middle Ages—and, unfortunately, for a generation or so after the Reformation—is overwhelming. When Dean Colet, in 1509, complained that all applicants were admitted indiscriminately to Holy Orders, so that the Church swarmed with "a multitude of unlearned and evil priests," he was only repeating, almost in so many words, what the Bishop of Mende had said to the Pope at the Council of Vienne in 1311. Moreover, both Colet and the Bishop lay stress on the fact that laws had been frequently enacted against these abuses, and that the Church needed no new legislation, but simply courage to enforce time-honoured and repeatedly-enacted laws. For, by a strange perversion of history, one of the plainest proofs of mediæval religious ignorance has been distorted by modern apologists into an argument for religious knowledge. If Council after Council, thundering against the "dumb dogs that bark not," enjoined that the clergy should at least be competent to read and speak Latin, and should give at

least a certain mimimum of elementary religious instruction from the pulpit, surely common sense would suggest that the very repetition and emphasis of such injunctions pointed to something wrong in practice. Yet Monsignor Vaughan in his "Faith and Folly" (p. 4), undertakes to prove by "the following indisputable authorities" that the Church has always fostered learning. He then proceeds to give bare references, without quotations, to five Church Councils, the references themselves full of blunders and evidently copied from some French book. The ingenious student who manages to verify these references will find them of this following type: "Henceforward let "no Bishop be suffered to confer deacon's or priest's orders on an "illiterate man; and let any such who may already have been ordained "be now compelled to learn. . . . . What doth he in the Church of "God if he be not skilled to read?" Abbot Gasquet, again, in his "Eve of the Reformation" and his essay on "Religious Instruction in "England," hardly comes any nearer to the real point. His references to episcopal registers are not accurate; and, even if the facts were as he states them, they prove no more than that mediæval villagers were generally as unwilling as modern Irish villagers to bring formal accusations of ignorance or neglect against their priests. On the other hand, like Monsignor Vaughan, he relies mostly on the repeated injunctions of Councils, and the repeated attempts of prominent Churchmen to encourage systematic teaching on the part of the parish clergy, without realising that the very multiplication of such injunctions, in the absence of direct evidence that they were obeyed, tells heavily against his own case. Gerson, indeed, twice mentions such injunctions, but only to imply that they were very imperfectly kept (II. 552 F and De Laud Script. Consid. XII.). And indeed we have the most definite evidence that this theoretical system of instruction was even less realised in practice than the average of mediæval theories. Bishop Haymo of Hythe, founding an almshouse in 1337 for the special benefit of men of good position who had come down in the world, made it a *sine quâ non* that they should know the Lord's prayer, the Ave, and the Creed! and we have many other indications to show how necessary his stipulation was. Berthold of Ratisbon, a mission-preacher of European fame, complains more than once that children reach the age of seven, fourteen, even twenty, without even learning their Lord's Prayer; and the same complaint was made by others in these ages when the clergy exercised the most despotic disciplinary powers over their parishioners. Again, the fifteenth century translation of the "Gesta Romanorum," published by the Early English Text Society, shows the grossest ignorance of the Bible; texts from the Apocalypse, Ezekiel and Canticles are quoted as from the Gospels; two from the Gospels and one from Job are attributed to St. Paul; Genesis is confused with Psalms, Isaiah with St. James; scraps of the Fathers are palmed off as Bible texts. The

Knight of La Tour-Landry, though his book was the most popular educational treatise of the later Middle Ages, and he claims to have written it with the help of two priests and two clerks whom he had in his castle, shows a still deeper ignorance of the Bible. His history of Ruth has scarcely anything but the heroine's name in common with the Scriptural narrative; Boaz is not even alluded to; the whole story is of Ruth's struggle with her stepsons for her late husband's property! A well-known carol of the fifteenth century makes Herod execute St. Stephen on the day after Christ's birth. The Franciscan Salimbene (A.D. 1280) bears incidentally the most damning testimony as to the Biblical ignorance both of clergy and of laity in the Italy (and perhaps the France) of his day. He tells us how he had heard priests "a hundred times" *quote as a text from St. Paul's Epistles* the cynical maxim of sacerdotal conduct, "si non caste, tamen caute" ("if we live not chastely, let us at least sin with caution"). His contemporary Berthold of Ratisbon bears similar testimony in his complaint that "many thousands," persuaded by indulgence-mongers, "falsely believe that they have done penance for all their sins with "a penny or a halfpenny . . . and so go straight to hell." The Oxford Chancellor Gascoigne, two centuries later, is still more emphatic on this last subject.

We may glean from many of the mediæval preachers a vivid idea of the ignorance and carelessness with which they had to wrestle. Let me quote from Berthold again. Some (he says) have not been seen in church for a month, or ten weeks, or even six months, though the women are better than the men. When they do come, "it irks some "to stand decently for a short hour in church, while God is being "served with singing or reading; they laugh and chatter as if they "were at a fair. They talk in church across from one to the other, "and boast and tell what they have seen in foreign lands, so that one "may well disturb six or ten others who would have gladly held their "tongues. . . . And ye women, ye never give your tongues rest from "useless talk! One tells the other how glad the maidservant is to "sleep, and how loth to work; another tells of her husband; a third "complains that her children are troublesome and sickly!" At this a cry of expostulation rises from the audience: "Yea, Brother "Berthold, but we understand not the Mass, and therefore can we not "pray as we had need, nor may we feel such devotion as if we under-"stood the Mass. The sermon indeed we can follow word by word, "but not the Mass; we know not what is being sung or read, we cannot "comprehend it. If it were so that we understood the Mass, then "might we pray far better to God and beseech His grace, and have "greater devotion in the Mass with prayer and other good things." Sir Thomas More also (whom Abbot Gasquet has tried to press into the service of his theory) tells us how little the congregation understood the Mass; and Busch shows the same in describing how, during an

interdict, the monks obeyed the Pope by suspending their Masses, without offending the townsfolk who demanded that these should proceed as usual. The Brethren had only to ring the bells and play their organ in the choir; and the citizens in the nave were quite happy in the belief that Mass was being said behind the screen. It is indeed difficult to realise how little the ordinary mediæval layman really comprehended of the Church services, and how perfunctory was even his personal attendance. From very early times we find complaints that parishioners went in and out pretty well as they chose during Mass. As St. Bernardino puts it, "There are many ignorant folk "who, when the priest is celebrating, come drunken from the taverns "or wait outside the church, talking of their oxen and worldly matters, "and even of obscenities; nor do they enter the church until the "elevation, at which they gaze in utter irreverence, with their heads "partly or wholly covered, and their stiff knees scarcely bowed; and "thus—after running noisily to see the Body of Christ, half inside and "half outside the Church—suddenly, after the barest glimpse of it, "they run off again as hastily as if they had seen not Christ but the "Devil!" The same complaint was made at the Council of Cologne in 1536, and repeated only five years later. The Knight of La Tour-Landry, writing for the instruction of his motherless daughters, confesses his own adhesion to that rigorous school which "susteineth "that none shulde not speak no manner thing whiles they ben atte "masse, and in especial atte the gospelle." Members of the third Orders of St. Dominic or St. Francis, among other very strict rules of conduct, were pledged not to talk during Mass or sermon. Among the brief and solemn instructions which St. Louis gave to his sons upon his deathbed, was the warning to "attend the service of Holy Church "devoutly and without jesting talk; . . . more especially in the Mass "when the consecration is made." Nor was this irreverence by any means confined to the laity. A bull of Clement V. (1311) complains that many clergy gabble through or cut short the daily services, "with "frequent intermixture of idle, profane, and unhonest discourse"; Gerson asserts that the clergy laugh and chatter during service "like "old women at market." More than one set of Cathedral Statutes forbids conversation between clergy at a distance of more than three (or in some cases four) stalls from each other; and in visitations of great churches both in England and in Normandy it is constantly noted that those who should be performing divine service are laughing, talking, or even walking about instead. Moreover, even the most formal offices of religious education were constantly neglected. Sacchetti speaks of "a good many" who did not feel certain that they had been baptised, and consoles them with the assurance that God would take their faith as equivalent to the deed. Gascoigne says that many children died unbaptised through the fault of the monastic clergy. A constitution of Archbishop Peckham (1287) complains that there were in England

"numberless people grown old in evil days who had not yet received "the grace of Confirmation"; and similar evidence has survived from Germany, Flanders and Austria.

Amid all this negligence and ignorance, religious knowledge flourished only among the unorthodox. We know this on the testimony of their most determined adversaries. "They know the "Apostles' Creed excellently in the vulgar tongue," says Etienne de Bourbon in speaking of thirteenth century heretics; "they learn by "heart the Gospels or the New Testament in the vulgar tongue, and "repeat them aloud to each other. . . . . I have seen a young cowherd "who had dwelt but one year in the house of a Waldensian heretic, "yet had attended so diligently and repeated so carefully all that he "heard as to have learned by heart within that year forty Sunday "Gospels, not counting those for feast-days; all which he had learned "word for word in his native tongue, apart from other extracts "from sermons and prayers. I have also seen some layfolk who were "so steeped in their doctrine that they could even repeat by heart a "great part of the Evangelists, as Matthew or Luke, and especially all "that is said therein of our Lord's teaching and speeches; so that "they could repeat them continuously with scarcely a wrong word "here and there. This I say on account of their diligence in evil "and the negligence of the Catholics in good: for many of these latter "are so negligent of their own and their families' salvation as scarce "to know their Pater or their Creed, or to teach the same to their "servants." Berthold of Ratisbon says the same of the Jews, that they knew their Bible better than Christian laymen, and were therefore dangerous adversaries. Gerson also complained that the neglect of religious education at Christian Universities contrasted disgracefully with the careful teaching given among the Jews (II., 761, 762). At the same time the Church blindly attempted to right herself by suppressing these unlicensed Scripture studies, instead of rivalling them by the thoroughness of her own instruction in orthodoxy: and even the enlightened and fair-minded Johann Busch, who would allow the laity some religious books in their mother tongue, disapproved of "such lofty or divine books" as a translation of the Communion service: indeed, finding one in the hands of some nuns he committed it to the flames (De Ref., p. 731). Compare with this the express testimony of Busch's elder contemporary Gerson. "We "do not say that all have a right to possess or read holy books— "especially books whose difficulties need explanation through other "treatises and glosses of doctors—for the common folk have neither "wit nor learning to do thus: but they ought to seek the law from "the mouths of the priests. Yet it seemeth not right to keep them "from moral and devout works which have neither difficulty nor "ambiguity nor absurdity in their translation, such as are the histories "or lives or legends of the saints, and holy meditations. Translations

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"in [the case of] other books are rightly blamed, since they offer "more occasion for arrogant error than for humble devotion or salutary "learning" (De Laud Script. Consid. XI.). When perhaps the greatest and best Churchman of the fourteenth century wrote like this, we need not wonder that Tyndale found it easy to persuade men that the clergy condemned his translation of the Bible mainly because they feared the exposure of their own juggleries with Biblical texts. The modern apology that only *unorthodox* translations of Bibles were kept from the laity is demonstrably false, and is contradicted even by Sir Thomas More, who is strangely quoted as the principal witness in its defence.* More does indeed give a somewhat qualified denial to such sweeping accusations as those of Tyndale, but he admits that, while heretics spent great sums on the Bible, yet no orthodox printer of his day dared to print any existing version lest it should be condemned and destroyed by the authorities. He thinks that the Bible needs to be masticated by the clergy before it is fit for the stomachs of the laity. He proposes the most ingenious devices by which the people may read a little of the Scriptures without learning too much. Let the Bible first be translated (he says) under proper authority by some good Catholic. Let each Bishop be provided with copies to lend in his diocese, but with infinite precautions, "to such as "he perceiveth honest." At the honest man's death, the Bible must revert to the Bishop, lest it fall into dangerous hands. Moreover, even these honest readers may not always be suffered to study at will: some men are fit to read the synoptic Gospels, to whom the Bishop would yet forbid St. John: to others again he might permit Ephesians, but by no means Romans. It was a pity, thought More, that some such scheme of Bible education had not been put into practice long ago. (*English Works*, pp. 240 ff.).

Indeed, it was even more regrettable than he could have foreseen, dying as he did before the great upheaval. If, from the thirteenth century onwards, the clergy had rivalled or outdone the heretics in Bible study and Bible teaching, there might perhaps have been no Reformation; but the Roman Catholic Church would also have been very different to what we now know under that name. The Church against which the Reformers protested was one in which the laity at large had never known *why* they believed, and seldom even *what* they were supposed to believe. No sooner was full light thrown upon it than it began to crumble away; for the faith of an educated modern Roman Catholic differs in many essential particulars even from that of the learned and candid More. The more violently modern apologists emphasise or exaggerate the unworthiness of the persons

* "This absolute denial of any attitude of hostility on the part of the Church to the translated Bible is reiterated in many parts of Sir Thomas More's English works." "It has been already pointed out how Sir Thomas More completely disposed of this assertion as to the hostility of the Clergy to the open Bible." Gasquet. *The Eve of the Reformation*, (1900) pp. 243, 246.

and of the methods by which the Reformation was brought about, the more they compel us to seek other causes for a change so sudden and so complete. In proportion as we are forbidden to explain it by the moral strength of the new doctrines, the plainest common sense compels us to surmise some fatal weakness in the old order of things: nor are we left to such surmises alone, for the impartial study of pre-Reformation records shows us fatal weaknesses in every direction. The people at large were not "robbed," as some men would now assure us, of the old faith: for that which fell away from them was a faith which, in the true sense, in the Biblical sense, they had never really held.

G. G. COULTON.

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